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ARTHUR FITZ-ALBINI,

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. II.

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ARTHUR FITZ-ALBINI.

CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY.

ON the evening of the 23d of December, 1797, the writer of these memoirs sits down to commence his second volume. Custom seems to have set him the example of a licence (while sheltered by the mask in which he appears) to

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B

mention

mention himself, without the imputation of vanity or self-conceit. That imputation it would indeed be strange if *he* should incur, whose whole life has, for the most part, been nothing but a series of disappointments. For what cause has he to think well of himself, whom praise has scarcely ever puffed up, or success flattered? It is rather, therefore, to apologize than to boast; to intreat indulgence than to claim applause that he ought to become an egotist. But not to intreat the indulgence of the forward, the insolent, the hard-hearted, the ignorant, the low! To such he may be forgiven for being proud in his own defence; a pride which envy, malignity, intrigue, oppression, and perfidy, will never shake.

Wisdom

Wisdom and Genius, indeed, are always candid; they seize merits, and overlook little defects; but Wisdom and Genius are rare. Half-witted Criticism and Stupidity console themselves by decrying that which they cannot comprehend.

It is then with a calm courage, with a degree of bold indifference, like that which accompanies despair, that he assumes his pen, to continue the work which he has undertaken; a work, which has consoled many hours of solitude, and which has given him an opportunity of discharging his mind of some of those reflections, which perpetual observation, and bitter experience, have taught him.

The complaint is not ill-founded, that in memoirs of this kind it is usual to paint life in false colours, and to mislead the eager fancies of the young. If such be the defect of the present, it must be from the imperfect perception and incapacity, and not from the design, of the writer; for, he has endeavoured to pourtray characters such as they are, and may every where be found, rather than those sickly creatures of a distempered brain, which surprize and interest only whilst they are new.

To delineate a being whose splendid qualities bear down all opposition, and render the ascent to Fame a path of flowers, may soothe the dreams of the idle and the weak. But Experience re-
jects

jects the portrait for its falsehood ; and Virtue for its evil effects. He who early sets out impatiently in the race of glory, and expects only to be wafted forward on the propitious gales of applause, will soon sink from disappointment, and be passed even by the dull plodder, who moves no faster than is necessary to escape contempt.

“ To scorn delights, and live laborious days,” as Milton says, must be the resolution of him who would aspire to permanent celebrity. Nor is labour alone sufficient. He must endure calumny, hatred, neglect, ridicule, and enmity, oblique as well as direct, and perpetually at work.

The mere love of fame, indeed, will seldom carry him through his difficulties; nor is he likely to continue his course, unless he receives intrinsic pleasure from the occupation by which he aspires to it. Virtue, it is said, is its own reward. So is literature: so are many other pursuits, that lead to applause.

The mind often derives a high delight from the exercise of its faculties. To fix the fleeting images of the brain, to catch, to arrange, and work into form, the doubtful glimmering ideas that are glancing by fits upon the perception, is generally an employment of pleasure, though it may be sometimes laborious. Happy is it for him who is thus occupied

pied, that it is so. For how seldom does he receive any other reward ! Listless or fastidious, ignorant or envious, his readers peruse with real or affected contempt the fond creations of his fancy ; and little knowing the difficulty of those tasks which they have never tried *, they feel themselves elevated in proportion to the triumph with which they neglect or scorn him.

Yet if in the tenderness of youth these chilling blasts nip some of his early blossoms, if they destroy some of his fairy dreams ; at a riper age, when his strength is more confirmed, they have but little effect.

* See Cowper's Task, book II. p. 60.

A writer is surely no longer at the mercy of the foolish, the pert, or the malignant, than while he expects their praise.

Far indeed is the author of these pages from such expectations. With no talents for popularity, with no manners of general conciliation, with no pliancy to the affectations of fashion, with no submission in sentiment to the cant of the day, how can he expect applause?

In the deep quiet of an unvaried solitude, he has perhaps different views of things from those of men who are perpetually engaged in the bustle of the world. If he fills up his time with an
innocent

innocent employment, if he improves the powers of his own mind, and leaves any virtuous traces of his existence behind him, does he not perform more than the generality of mankind have performed? He had ambition once; and he may have it again, if he sees there is room for the occupations which he loves. But to those, who cannot join the clamours of faction, it seems a period little consonant to a manly spirit.

While the charms of nature cheer the weariness of existence, and make him occasionally forget all complaints, and all sorrows, with delighted spirits he sometimes catches the passing shadows of his brain, and perpetuates a

picture which consoles some of his hours of languor and depression. But these are but the momentary flashes of an indolent or a weakened mind. He feels a keen regret at the days and weeks that have hastened away in idleness or debility, without the power or the resolution of amendment.

Solitude may often reinvigorate the plumes of Contemplation—but it too frequently encourages the feeble dreams of a sluggish repose. It is remarkable that they who have left to posterity the pictures of the most eloquent and vigorous minds, have been persons particularly engaged in the active scenes of life, of which Julius Cæsar, Cicero, and Sir Walter Raleigh, are eminent instances.

Mr.

Mr. Gibbon observes, in the Memoirs of his own Life, that he never found his mind so active and vigorous for study and composition, as during the hurry of a full metropolis, and the bustle of a parliamentary attendance at an important period.

In such a scene of activity, he who writes this has never had the honour to be engaged. Too proud to solicit a seat as the dependent of ministers, or great men; too poor to carry on expensive and uncertain contests, against Indian extortion, or the usurious plenty of loan-contracting bankers, he sees the most stupid, the most ignorant, and the most profligate of mankind, who can bribe thousands of drunken

voters, and pay, without ruin, the prodigality and fraudulent charges of tavern-keepers, and interested agents, step over his head with brutal insolence, while he is left in the shades of a silent retreat to soothe his indignation by the flashes of imagery and sentiment that now and then break in upon its darknesses.

Dark indeed is the scenery around him; or worse than dark:—a wide waste of mental sterility, in which no literature, no refined intelligence, no intellectual flowers even feebly flourish.

But a set of beings,

“*nati consumere fruges,*”

conceited in proportion to their ignorance, and self-important in proportion

to

to their insignificance, meet to disgrace wealth, and be a satire upon education; while, if there be one, whom his unhappy lot has placed among them, addicted to more worthy pursuits, him they mark out for the object of their unceasing persecution; attempt, by the clamour of numbers, what they cannot effect by reason; watch his foibles; exaggerate his faults, and, with the low buffoonery of chimney-sweeps, cover with dirt him whom they cannot overcome.

“ But, in the magnificent revenues
 “ of a richly-endowed cathedral, has
 “ Literature found no fostering provi-
 “ sions? From the immense landed
 “ revenue, of which, in reserved rents
 “ and

“and fines, the net produce must be
“between twenty and thirty thousand
“pounds a year, Genius must have
“found a generous support ! A library,
“which has had an opportunity of accu-
“mulating by a public provision almost
“from the commencement of printing,
“will surely afford inexhaustible sources
“of information and amusement !”—
Alas ! how visionary is the hope !—
By *bear-leaders* *, and booby younger
sons of peers, a *book-worm* (as every
learned man is termed in derision) is held
in the most supreme contempt. And as
to a library, their wealthy revenues leave
no superfluities for that, to which scarce

* Travelling tutors, with which description
of persons most of the rich prebendal stalls are
filled up.

One hundred volumes have been added in a century and a half—while the ponderous tomes, which have found a place there in better times, are left quietly to repose in dust and damp upon their shelves!

Yet what can be expected from the taste that tears away the sacred inscriptions of the dead, that its nicer eyes may be gratified with the uniform neatness of a new pavement of Portland stone; and removes, and throws away in mutilated parts, the rich monuments of deans and soldiers of better times, the beautiful specimens of the arts of former days, because, forsooth, a little Gothic chapel, of the richest workmanship, seemed to disturb the uniformity
of

of the building, in the judgement of a chapter of prigs, and *petit-maitres*! Are these things to be done without shame or remorse? Is it a proper answer, to be told, upon remonstrating, "*that we have old things enough!*" Is this the proper language of a man, who subsists upon the bounty of establishments! who owes it to them, that he rolls in luxuries by no merits of his own!

Here then it is in vain to seek for society, which is better found amongst the illiterate cultivators of the soil, who will be content to talk upon subjects on which their necessary employments must give them some information. And how few subjects are there more interesting than this, of which the habits of

life

life of these men give them some intelligence ! Next to the knowledge of the principles and the passions of human beings, it is certainly one of the most important that can occupy our thoughts. Of all the modes of exertion whereby a livelihood or riches are obtained, it is surely at once the most healthy, the most pleasant, and the most honourable. To watch the progress of the seasons, to live in the open air, to produce the food of life, is truly to mingle utility with delight.

This is that more humble employment which, in rural solitude, can fill up with the best satisfaction those long intervals between the flights of fancy, which all must require. For
who

who has strength to be always on the wing?

To feel the airs of Heaven blow around one; to anticipate in the short gleams of a wintry sunshine the first days of spring; the spreading verdure of the fields; the budding of the hedges and trees; the opening songs of birds, and the resurrection of Nature; to receive an involuntary expansion of the heart, and a gratitude for the mere pleasure of existence; will put to flight the remembrance of difficulties, and ill-usage, of neglect, malignity, and ignorance. Thus at least has the writer of these memoirs sought and found his best consolation. In the grand scenery of the creation has he found an antidote
to

to disappointment, perfidy, and baseness. After having seen something of the world ; after having early fled from the litigious, nonsensical, and disgusting, subtleties of the Bar ; after having experienced a little of the vacant and barren life of a Soldier ; it is in the solitary charms of Nature, and the simplest and earliest of all human occupations, that, since Fate has shut him from those congenial employments of which his boyish ambition was wont to dream, he can find satisfaction and oblivion of his wrongs during the long periods when his enfeebled mind cannot continue its literary pursuits.

“ But whither does all this lead,”
perhaps the reader will ask ; “ has he
“ forgot

“forgot the hero of his tale in the recital of his own complaints?” No: while he has detained thee, censorious reader, with a mixture of lamentation, apology, and, possibly thou wilt add, defiance, he has left his friend Arthur to much more melancholy sufferings, as thou shalt hear in the following chapter.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

ARTHUR FITZ-ALBINI returned home on the day succeeding that which I have described him to have spent at Orleton, in the last chapter of the former volume.

The morning was fine ; the views rich and beautiful. A tender pleasing kind of melancholy spread with a gentle thrill over his whole frame. Yet he entered the gates of Dallington with a palpitating heart, and on dismounting at the house saw in the distressed looks of the domestics

domestics nothing to assuage his anxieties. He learned too soon the alarming state in which his father lay ; and on visiting his room heard the tremulous tones of a bewildered understanding, gone, alas ! never to return ! and, incapable for more than a few moments of enduring the excessive shock, was seized with the convulsions of a distracted heart, a thousand times more dreadful than the melancholy situation of him for whom he grieved.

He was hurried out of the apartment, while he sobbed, and almost raved—
“ My father ! ” he exclaimed : “ my
“ father ! author of my being ! my
“ cherisher ! my instructor ! my pro-
“ tector ! Let me but hear the tones
“ of

“ of that dear voice but once more, as
“ they used to be !—Poverty, disgrace,
“ ruin—let them all come—and I will
“ bear them without a moan—let me
“ but recover my father !—Hark !—it
“ is still—I shall never hear that dear-
“ est, dearest, voice again ! O what
“ are all the pains and tortures, that my
“ most frightful fancy ever conjured
“ up, to this ! — Gracious Father of
“ Mercies ! if it might be permitted
“ that but once again I might receive
“ the blessing of those beloved lips !”—

His mother interrupted his ravings ;
but, overcome herself, sunk lifeless up-
on the floor. A medical person in the
house put an end to this distracting
scene, by withdrawing Arthur, who had
now sunk into a stupid insensibility, to
another

another apartment, where his bed, with the application of some composing draughts, detained him till the next day.

During that day, his father grew gradually weaker; and on that which followed he expired.—Two days passed before the alarming state of Arthur's mind rendered it prudent to acquaint him with the event. When at length it was opened to him, it instantly affected him again with a most alarming distraction, in which the fury of his grief never ceased, but with a still more melancholy idiotism—such as must have torn with the most painful pity the hardest heart.

While

While he laboured under these afflicting misfortunes, his mother followed her husband to that peaceful "bourne" where her sorrows would find repose.

At length, this unfortunate young man began to recover some strength of mind as well as body. As soon as his health became re-established, there were many painful duties to undergo, which they, who had the care of his convalescence, would willingly have delayed, if not dispensed with;—but to avoid or defer them was impossible. The state of his affairs required some immediate steps to be taken without loss of time.

The solicitor, the steward, and the melancholy, heart-broken Arthur, met; the evidence-room was opened; the will was found; and to it was affixed an outside direction to his son, to read it, at his leisure, by himself. He kissed the hand-writing, and burst out into a fresh agony of tears, which induced Mr. Woodison, the solicitor, a good and gentle-hearted man (a rare character in that abominable profession), to extort a promise from him to defer it, till he should have the leave of Dr. Carver, a physician, whose head and heart did honour to his profession.

The

The WILL of
EDMUND FITZ-ALBINI, Esq.

After beginning in the usual manner, he goes on to say, that, as he means only to do exactly what the law would have done in case he had made no disposition, he rather takes the opportunity of making a will, for the purpose, in this solemn manner, of entering into some little history of his affairs, and entreating the forgiveness of his dear son, than for the common purposes of such an instrument. He then proceeds in these words:

“Whereas my dutiful, accomplished;
“and beloved son, Arthur Fitz-Albini,
C 2 “Esquire,

“ Esquire, being my only child, can-
“ not doubt that to him I give and
“ bequeath all my property whatsoever
“ and wheresoever, both real and per-
“ sonal, subject to his mother’s join-
“ ture, which, were it not as com-
“ petent as it is, would yet be much
“ more than that most excellent woman
“ would require!—Yet, after this be-
“ quest, well knowing how many large
“ manors and estates I possess in this
“ county wherein I live, he may won-
“ der at the contracted stile within
“ which my expences have been bound-
“ ed, and the anxiety I have some-
“ times expressed, and do again most
“ painfully express, at his prospects
“ in life.—It is now my sad duty to
“ tell him, with my own hand, that
“ which

“ which I ought long since to have
“ told him in person, and which he
“ would too soon know from other
“ channels, that the estates, which
“ will, when he shall read this, be
“ devolved to him, as well by law as
“ by devise, are burdened with a debt
“ of £.110,000, of which the interest
“ has laid most heavy indeed upon his
“ father for the greater part of a long
“ life. And whereas the rental of the
“ said estates, on which the said debt
“ is secured, is not less than £.9350
“ a year; yet, with the deduction of
“ repairs and land-tax, it has, for
“ several years last past, after paying
“ the interest of the said debt, left
“ but a scanty income to me, the said
“ testator. It behoves me, therefore,

“ to express my sorrow at the un-
“ comfortable state in which I shall
“ leave my only child, the delight of
“ my life, and the ornament of his
“ house; and, though the sale of
“ these, the antient estates of his fa-
“ mily, which can be proved for four
“ centuries to have never been dis-
“ membered from the name of Fitz-
“ Albini, might afford him a great
“ relief, and, probably, at least double
“ his income; yet, as his father has
“ struggled through a long life of
“ difficulties and self-denials, that he
“ might save himself and his posterity
“ from this heavy misfortune and dis-
“ grace, he has no fear that the ge-
“ nerous spirit of his son will, as long
“ as it is possible, pursue the same line
“ of

“ of conduct, and retain to the last a
“ property, which has hitherto stood
“ so many chances and shocks of time.
“ And whereas the afore said frightful
“ debt of £. 110,000 may seem to leave
“ a heavy blot upon my memory : there-
“ fore, that I may not totally lose, even
“ after death, the affections of my son,
“ I think it necessary to declare, that,
“ of the above large sum, something
“ more than £. 50,000 was an incum-
“ brance left to devolve upon me,
“ together with the estate, by my an-
“ cestors; and although, for the re-
“ mainder, I am far from being able
“ to clear myself from blame, yet the
“ following little history of it will, in
“ the candid judgement of my be-
“ loved Arthur, find many mitigations.

“ When I came into possession of my
“ inheritance, the mansion was dila-
“ pidated, the estates out of repair, and
“ it cost me nearly £.20,000 to put
“ them into due order. Besides this
“ heavy addition to a debt already
“ large, a distant relation, having some
“ doubtful claims to an inconsiderable
“ debt, drew me, through the means
“ of an artful and flattering attorney,
“ at an unguarded moment, to sign
“ a bond for £.10,000, which they no
“ sooner got possession of, than, de-
“ fying all the remonstrances, expla-
“ nations, and appeals to their honour,
“ they put into instant execution against
“ me. Nor was this the only instance
“ wherein my open and unsuspecting
“ temper fell a prey to perfidy. An
“ agent,

“agent, whom I had for more than
“twenty years employed, with an un-
“bounded, perhaps indolent, confi-
“dence, without keeping the proper
“checks and documents, to be a
“guard upon his accounts, at length
“brought his books to a balance, when
“I called for the large arrears that
“ought to have been in his hands, by
“setting up a claim against me of
“£. 17,000, which he so contrived as
“to pay himself by fines and falls of
“timber that took place at that time;
“though that produce had been set
“apart to pay other demands, which;
“as he soon after became a bankrupt,
“I could never recover any part from
“him to satisfy, and was therefore
“obliged to discharge by another loan.

“ The remainder of the debt has
“ accumulated at various times, when
“ the rents of the estates, lower and
“ less productive than at present, left
“ me no adequate income above
“ the annual demands of interest.
“ And whereas one *John Pluggot*, a
“ pettifogging attorney of the lowest
“ extraction, having been a few years
“ since nothing more than a ragged
“ copying-clerk in attorneys’ offices;
“ and, having been, amongst others,
“ employed by my aforesaid steward,
“ of notorious memory, and, getting
“ thereby some insight into the nature
“ of my incumbrances, and the names
“ of the mortgagees, has since, by
“ some fraudulent means, obtained
“ articles of clerkship, and thereby
“ become

“ become licensed to practise himself
“ as a lawyer : and whereas, in order
“ to maintain himself by the wicked
“ prostitution of the powers of this
“ profession, he has since inveigled
“ himself into the employment of some
“ of the aforesaid mortgagees, and,
“ well knowing the difficulty, and even
“ impossibility, of borrowing money
“ on private securities, at a time when
“ a system of public borrowing, which
“ aggravates tenfold all the evils, pub-
“ lic and private, of a distressing war,
“ offers an exorbitant and usurious
“ interest to the lender, and therefore
“ draws all money within the vortex
“ of the Treasury coffers, has made
“ diverse insolent and most unprin-
“ ciple applications to me to demand

“ the repayment of several of the afore-
“ said mortgages, whereby he has
“ created me much expence and un-
“ easiness, which has aggravated the
“ sorrows of my last days, and pro-
“ bably will send me sooner to my
“ grave: I charge my dear Arthur, if
“ ever he should obtain a seat in that
“ honourable assembly, which is the
“ only proper scene for his splendid
“ abilities, to call, with all that fervid
“ eloquence which he possesses, upon
“ the wisdom of that powerful House,
“ to pare the claws and disarm the
“ fangs of these, the most abandoned
“ and blood-thirsty of all the beasts
“ that prey upon the misfortunes of
“ society.”

Dated 3 Oct. 1794.

At

At length came the day when Arthur Fitz-Albini persuaded himself that he possessed the resolution to unfold this affecting instrument.

He read it with intervals of sighs and convulsed tears; but the sighs and tears were all for the loss of his father, and love, pity, and reverence for his memory. Not a thought on the state of his affairs mingled with them; nor, indeed, had any worldly concerns mixed themselves with his other sorrows, would he have found such a bitter source of grief in them. The property appeared to be in a better state than he had latterly expected; and, knowing how little he cared for personal expences, he had scarce any
fear

fear of managing those matters as he wished.

But the solitude of the house, the last tones of his father's voice, the kind quiet looks of his mother, which were always ringing in his ear, or haunting his sight, were now scarce supportable.

He fled to London; but his spirits were too weak for the bustle of the streets; and, while he felt the dreary depression of dereliction, had not yet the effort to emerge from the loneliness of his own apartments. But, if by chance he sought the protection of crowds, he perceived that they, who had formerly solicited his acquaintance with a disgusting meanness, now shunned

OR

or slightly noticed him. He knew too well the characters of mankind to be unacquainted with the cause. An exaggerated account of his encumbered, or, as it was said, ruined fortune, had already reached the ears of all to whom he was known; and, where there was supposed to be poverty, he could not be ignorant that there would not be believed to exist either virtue, abilities, or any other quality worth courting. He was so well convinced of this, that he was sure it would operate still more strongly upon relations even than acquaintance; that those who formerly boasted his alliance would now look blank upon the mention of his name in every company where there was the least suspicion of their consanguinity.

sanguinity. Nor was he unapprized that friendship, with a very few exceptions, could as little endure this test, as relationship.

But all this rather roused than depressed his spirits. He drove away the recollection of such baseness with scorn, and called a proper pride to his defence. He recollected that it was impossible for him to be so mean as those who shunned him.

Yet while he felt no satisfaction in employing his thoughts upon himself or his own affairs, he endeavoured to afford some relief and variety to his mind by extending its reflections to the state of the nation.

“It

“ It is of little consequence,” thought he, “ what may be the state of my private circumstances, when the rich and the poor seem too likely soon to fall into one common calamity. Where it possible for me to be so selfish and so wicked as not to look beyond my own personal feelings; it would be by far the highest gratification I could now, in my sad and forlorn state, experience, to have an opportunity of gloriously closing a miserable life in defence of that Constitution which I adore. But the perfidy, the fury, the bloodshed, and murder, of a civil war, the helpless sufferings of women, of age, and of infancy, are too horrible for foresight to endure. I cannot, therefore,

“ fore,

“ fore, as I walk the streets, or sit in
“ coffee-houses, mark, without agony,
“ the countenances and expressions of
“ the foolish and unreserved adherents
“ of a certain party, who console the
“ envy and malignity of their hearts
“ at the inferior situations in which it
“ is their lot to be placed, with hopes
“ of an early change, when it will be
“ their turn to triumph, and trample
“ on the necks of those, who now,
“ according to their ideas, oppress
“ them. My blood is chilled when I
“ hear a certain set of catch-words and
“ virulent phrases at the tips of their
“ tongues, and uttered through their
“ teeth with a kind of malignant con-
“ fidence at every turn and occasion,
“ and in almost every argument. How
“ are

“ are my ears stunned with such toasts
 “ as these :

‘ *Leaves and Fishes to the meritorious—*
 ‘ *by real representation.*

‘ *The most Reverend and Merciful the*
 ‘ *Inquisitors.*

‘ *His Grace the Duke of Done-up—*
 ‘ *Nil nisi Cecropides.*

‘ *The most Sacred the Fountains of Nick-*
 ‘ *names through the World.*

‘ *Bellona—Halloo—Let slip the Dogs*
 ‘ *of War.*—

“ and a thousand more such *. Surely
 “ all this is the uncontrollable insolence
 “ of men who think themselves certain
 “ of their game. To those who possess
 “ not only that sagacity which enables

* See a long List in *Gent. Mag.* LXII. 8.

“ them

“ them to see pretty clearly into the
“ characters and views of human na-
“ ture, but have in their memory the
“ luminous history of Lord Clarendon,
“ in which all the same intrigues, arts,
“ misrepresentations, reasonings, and
“ very phrases, were used, and by
“ exactly similar descriptions of men,
“ the prospect is very alarming. I am
“ sorry to see a great Minister, instead
“ of exerting every fair means whereby
“ all the wisdom and rank and property
“ of the kingdom may be drawn to
“ rally round the constitution, a little
“ too confident of his own powers, a
“ little too jealous of the participation
“ of his Herculean labours, and ga-
“ thering round him a set of boys, of
“ whom I remember the greater part
“ but

“ but lately at college, of no abilities,
“ and no lustre of descent, and many
“ of low, some even the lowest, ex-
“ traction and connections, and with-
“ out even the qualification of pro-
“ perty. Under these circumstances,
“ indeed, the disobliged and slighted
“ orders of nobility and gentry have
“ supported the common cause with
“ more vigour and unanimity than
“ could have been expected. But the
“ seeds of discord and danger are
“ surely laid; and, at some future
“ period, the effect, it is, alas! too
“ probable, will be most calamitously
“ felt. It is already but too apparent
“ that he wants the support of those
“ co-operating talents, and that weight
“ derived from integrity of character,
“ and

“ and a deep hold upon property,
“ without which it is utterly impossible
“ for the most stupendous powers of
“ mind to perform every thing ; and
“ stupendous undoubtedly are the
“ powers of mind of this great man.
“ In no age but the present could folly
“ be so daring, so void of shame, as
“ to profess a doubt of them. Yet
“ how much I grieve that another
“ great man, with abilities, perhaps,
“ not less wonderful, with more of
“ sentiment, more milkyness of heart,
“ more of what is generally under-
“ stood by the term of Genius, should,
“ by a course of more than twenty
“ years spent, for the most, in party
“ opposition ; by an indiscreet and in-
“ controulable impetuosity of temper ;
“ and

“ and the unceasing intrigues, flatteries,
“ irritations, and threats, of an able,
“ active, unprincipled, diabolical,
“ body, upon whom he has been
“ thrown, have so far heated his en-
“ larged and admirable intellects, en-
“ tangled his resolves, and prescribed
“ his future conduct, as to make good
“ and circumspect men fearful of his
“ guidance, and incapable of relying
“ on his support. Attractive, accom-
“ modating, candid, wise, as he cer-
“ tainly is, from an extended inter-
“ course with the diversities of human
“ life, and with all the turns and wind-
“ ings of the human heart ; his saga-
“ city ; his skill to temper the passions,
“ and soothe and satisfy the prejudices
“ of mankind ; had often been of
“ eminent

“ eminent advantage, where plans
“ formed upon abstract reasoning, and
“ abstruse, dry, unpliant speculations,
“ that are often the farthest removed
“ from that high wisdom of which
“ they would assume the name, have
“ been dangerous and inefficient !

“ Wherever I turn my eyes, the
“ prospect is involved in impene-
“ trable gloom and horror. Proscrip-
“ tion, Desolation, Murder, Famine !
“ O that my fate could be like that of
“ the incomparable Lord Falkland !”

But these general reflections were not long suffered to engage his mind. More private concerns soon pressed again on his head, his heart, and his temper. The demands upon him, between
interest

interest and principal, were so much greater than the rental of his estate could satisfy, that he saw little prospect even of the smallest competence of income for himself. Whither was he to fly? What was he to do? Though yet very young, he was scarcely young enough, or, at least, but ill-adapted, for the commencement of a profession. And indeed there was but one profession that was not entirely out of the question. This was the army. But, with his birth, talents, acquirements, with all that laxity of person, manners, and sentiment, and all those peculiarities incident to genius, to begin from the lowest step of that long gradation, at his age, and serve as a subaltern among boys, and men promoted from the ranks, was

by far too unpleasant to be endured ; and this at a period when new regulations (altogether wise, yet requiring some exceptions) prohibited promotion without some years of previous service.

There were modes by which he had reason to think his difficulties could at once be vanquished, and his estates restored to their former power. But these remedies he abhorred. Miss Pickman, never the object of his choice, was now become the aversion of his thoughts, by the impression which Miss St. Leger had made both on his fancy and his heart.

Yet what hopes could he indulge from such a passion ? Miss St. Leger had no fortune ; himself, perhaps, was in a worse

worse situation than if he had nothing; for, he was answerable for an enormous debt, which it depended on the fluctuating circumstances of the times, whether that which was devolved upon him with it would enable him to discharge.

Sir James Pickman did not long suffer him to remain in London, without waiting upon him, and inviting him in so pressing a manner to dinner at his house in Grosvenor-square, that he could not evade it. The size of the house, the splendour of the furniture, and the number and gaudy liveries of the servants, were intended to make a deep impression on his mind. A party was assembled, such as Sir James's character enabled him to bring together. It was a

motley crew, and of motley manners, mixing, with some people of fashion and polish, others of whom, though exceedingly rich, the men had all the meanness of the lowest counting-house; and the women, if old, literally the pronunciation, sentiments, and air, of a cook-maid; while their daughters, born since their prosperity had empowered them to pay for the accomplishments of a boarding-school, and therefore less illiterate, and much ashamed of their parents, were not less disgusting by a more forward and confident, but different, kind of vulgarity.

Here was Lord Strathcaron, a Scotch peer, of no fortune, who was content to subsist upon his rank by attending
invitations

invitations to the tables of low wealthy people, to whose vanity his titles rendered him acceptable.

Here was also Sir Tirrell Calshot, who, having spent an ample estate in his youth, by a vain and empty dissipation, and a foolish ambition to associate with nobility, without having furnished himself with any useful qualities, and any consolations or amusements for a more sedate period of life, found himself deserted in the season of need by those whom his profusion had formerly entertained, and thought himself lucky, if his frivolous civilities, and other qualifications of a battered beau, made him still acceptable in lower, though not less plentiful, circles, where he could find

ears tickled with the names and anecdotes of all those titled friends of former days, whom that he could remember without disgust and indignation, after that mean desertion of him, of which he was content to suppress the mention, augured the most groveling and degraded spirit.

Here was Sir Richard Jarr, with his lady. This person was a city knight and alderman ; and well enough in his vocation. For, having very dull and mean abilities, just sufficient to know the price of stocks, and balance an account, he had the judgement, or want of spirit, never to venture beyond his depth ; and, being of a very sordid temper, seemed, by the mere operation of saving, to be
accumu-

accumulating a competent fortune, though his outset was very poor, and he was of an house by no means rich. This is a character which, of all others, seems in itself the most secure from absurdities. But he had the chance to marry a most fantastical wife *, who, though she

* The character here delineated has given rise to a most ridiculous anecdote, which the author forbears to mention. To demand that all the personages of a novel should be the airy visions of the brain, and take no features from some of those beings who occasionally intrude themselves upon observation in real life, is surely neither possible nor desirable.

It would be beneath the dignity of Literature to answer the calumnies with which self-important people, perhaps utterly unknown to the author, or who, if known, are so far from engaging his attention, that they are below his notice, have attacked him, in consequence of having applied some of the characters of these volumes to themselves. Instances of vanity, or disgusting traits which may have attracted his early disapproba-

she brought him a fortune of £.10,000, which was his sole or chief inducement for marrying her, and was of a disposition equally penurious with himself, yet had the whim and vanity to consider herself as a woman of fashion and genius, to neither of which she had the most distant pretensions. She was the daughter of a gentleman, yet of most private family; but, taking a house not

tion, have not improbably given a peculiarity to some of his delineations. But surely if any thing of this kind has occasionally escaped the author's pen, it would be wise in those who feel it to keep their own counsels. Let them not be led by their vanity into the ridiculous error of believing themselves of sufficient consequence to call the notice of the general reader to the similitude! If the foibles of human beings are never to be touched, lest some foolish individual should choose "to wear the cap," there is an end to the most valuable species of literary composition.

March 20, 1799.

far

far distant from the court, she had the folly to push her little ugly person forward at drawing-rooms at St. James's; and though it was impossible she could receive any notice there, it gave her an opportunity afterwards of boasting of it before such parts of the company she kept as were not equally presumptuous, and of cultivating the acquaintance of a few of the refuse of the numerous nobility, English, Scotch, and Irish, who swarm in London, and whom she afterwards inveigled to her assemblies.—At these assemblies was always seen a motley mixture, which seemed not unlike the groupes of a puppet-show:—for Sir Richard was too wary to affront his city connections, and was therefore obliged both to send and receive invitations, of which his wife was much ashamed.

And now, though she appeared at Sir James Pickman's, she discovered to a discerning eye many haughty toffes, and much suppressed indignation; and by the tenor of her conversation would have appeared, to a person ignorant of her birth, as if she had been a daughter of some great house, some family whose name was surrounded with lustre in our histories, and had prescriptively held an hereditary pre-eminence in the state, of which the memory entitled her to a consequence that no marriage with a citizen could overbalance. For, it is scarce to be believed, that, proud and vain as she was, and with an uncommon predilection in favour of rank and fashion, she could suppose that in these days much honour was derived from a city knighthood. Yet in the country she

she is said to give herself more airs than in London, amongst the wives and daughters of the country-gentlemen, to whom she seems to think herself superior for living more in the world, as she calls it. Her display of genius consists in a profuse, empty, vapid kind of sentimental talking, or epistolary correspondence, which I believe was never known to attend persons of real abilities.

Here was Sir John Tegge, with his lady, a country baronet and clergyman, whose father, with a very slender fortune, had inherited the title collaterally from a notorious rebel of the last century; a rebel who, like many other rebels, was rewarded at the Restoration with a baronet's

patent, and was afterwards famous for taking advantage of the jealousy of certain parliamentary privileges to retain an estate, from which an heroic and illustrious family had been unjustly ejected, but of which not one acre has descended to his representatives.—This gentleman and his wife had occasionally visited London on business, whither they very rarely came, and being acquainted with Sir James Pickman in consequence of visits to a relation who lived in the neighbourhood of Sir James's house in the country, had solicitously sought out their few London *friends* (as their term was), and afforded Sir James an opportunity of adding another title to his party. It was not a little entertaining to see with what an air Sir John and my Lady entered

tered the drawing-room, and their subsequent chagrin at not obtaining that consequence and attention which they thought their due. They expected that the title of an obscure country Baronet, whose name was never heard in the world, would be a passport to notice in London, and dropped hints about rank, and the improper confusion of orders, in a manner which would have been ridiculous in nobility; nay, they took place of Lady Jarr, with a complacence which raised *even her* risibility, who was very much inclined to think whatever had a title "*charming*." Sir John was a dull, narrow, covetous, ignorant, selfish, envious, man, who attempted to cover a very high degree of ill temper, pride, ambition, and other bad passions, under
a dif-

a disgusting kind of occasional cant, which he called religion. Lady Tegge, whatever she might have been if otherwise allied, seemed from a pliability of nature, in the endeavour to accommodate, to have adopted, and perhaps exceeded, all his faults and absurdities. This couple afforded a good comedy to the company the greater part of the evening.

Here was old Mrs. Puffhus, a woman of such astonishing and indescribable vulgarity, that, as she entered the room, and made her uncouth curtsies, and addresses to the circle, Fitz-Albini, by no means apt to be rude without provocation, first stared with a wonder which he could not suppress, and then turning
aside

aside his face, burst out into a loud and incontrollable laugh.

Here was Mr. Brock, a mean, illiterate man, who had been formerly a broker, and had now, by all the iniquitous arts of stock-jobbing, amassed considerable wealth. And with him came a coarse wife, and two or three tall, tossing, inelegant daughters, bedaubed with feathers, and finery.

To these were added three or four Members of Parliament, among whom there were a paper-maker, a broken apothecary, and a miller turned contractor, who all having been used many years to dabble as agents in the elections of their respective boroughs, at last contrived to

bring in themselves upon the influence of other people's moneys which they had formerly spent in them.

Fitz-Albini, dressed in the deepest sable, with a countenance wan and melancholy, to which the shade of his brown hair, combed negligently from his forehead, gave an animating contrast, afforded a tall, graceful, and manly figure, which was neither lost upon Miss Pickman nor the rest of the women.

The anger of Miss Pickman at the last interview with him at Orleton, was in the moment forgot; and she sighed and languished for the opportunity to convince him how little the report of his encumbered fortune affected her, and
how

how much her love exceeded the considerations of interest. And while Lady Jarr, who thought herself neither an ill-judge of the persons and manners of men, nor pretended to be a platonist in her feelings towards them, betrayed a lively interest at his appearance; and Lady Tegge herself confessed, that “if her
“ dear Sir John was out of the question,
“ she had not seen a young man a long
“ while she should have liked better;” and Mrs. Puffhus exclaimed, that “for
“ her part she thought him a vast proper man; and if she were young
“ again, and her poor dear Mr. Puffhus himself to come a courting, she
“ was not sure but she might turn tail
“ upon him, after seeing that there most
“ handsomest young gentleman,” Miss
Pickman,

Pickman, though she could not avoid smiling at these last expressions, felt her inclinations encouraged and fomented. But she turned her fond eyes upon him in vain. Fitz-Albini, who had now admitted into his heart one image, which he cherished there with a tenderness so sacred that he abhorred the very thought of profaning it by attentions to any other, received her advances with a chilling kind of coldness and neglect.

He rather preferred listening to the ridiculous conversations of the table, while Sir Tirrell Calshot told his tales of "the old set," and their feats at clubs, and at masquerades, thirty years ago; and Mrs. Puffhus, and Lady Tegge, and all the female tribe of
Brocks,

Brock, drank in with greedy and astonished ears all the long string of titles which, with an easy volubility of tongue, he introduced into his anecdotes; and Lady Jarr, by her pertinent remarks and occasional corrections, seemed anxious to prove herself no less skilled in his vocabulary of high-sounding names than he was, till her impatience to tell something of herself overcame her politeness, and put an end to his fluent harangue. Nor was he less entertained with what followed from her Ladyship. “You was speaking, I think,” said her Ladyship, “of the King. That is a subject I could speak upon for ever. Do you know, I quite love the King. I am sure I have reason to love him. He is so good to me, and takes so much notice
“of”

“ of my children. There is that rude boy
“ of mine ; his Majesty had seen him
“ once or twice ; and meeting him again
“ the other day, he had the condescen-
“ sion to notice him—‘ *Ab, little Pickle,*
“ says his Majesty, ‘ how does your fa-
“ ther do ?’ So we call him *little Pickle*.
“ —And was it not very good of his Ma-
“ jesty ?—“ Madam,” said somebody,
disgusted with her folly, “ it was certainly
“ very witty of his Majesty.”—For the
truth was, that Sir Richard’s father was an
oilman, but her Ladyship’s vanity had to-
tally hardened her to the sting of the jest.

Sir John Tegge, who had sat uneasy
at a kind of nonsense, not perfectly
agreeable to his passions, now took the
opportunity of informing the company,
that

that he was come up to town principally for the purpose of attending the levee ; for, “ though perhaps he felt some reluctance at this disturbance of the “ quiet life he led in the country, yet it “ was a duty he owed to his rank, and “ he would not shrink from it in these “ levelling times.”—“ What think *you*, “ Lady Jarr ?” he added, “ don’t *you* “ think I’m right, eh, my Lady, eh !” —“ Oh, yes, to be sure, Sir John !” she replied, with a calm contempt ; for, living as she did constantly in the metropolis, and attending drawing-rooms frequently, instead of once a year, she thought herself vastly superior to a country baronet. Fitz-Albini, before whom Sir John thought he was displaying a great deal of importance, was all
this

this while staring at him, as if in doubt whether he was drunk or mad.

Miss Pickman, who had seen enough of Fitz-Albini to be aware of the astonishment which possessed him, whispered him the name of the gentleman, with an expression or two of ridicule, which led to a farther conversation. "He is indeed, Mr. Fitz-Albini," said she, "a most absurd, vulgar, ignorant
" man. But we are not often used to
" such society, as we meet sometimes at
" Orleton," with a significant smile. "To preserve the dignity of family,
" where fortune has not been equally
" kind with Nature; to feel it a protection from insult or haughtiness,
" while it never exposes itself by im-
" proper

“ proper assumptions, is the lot of
“ few.”—“ I own,” replied Fitz-Albi-
ni, “ Sir John Tegge does not set off
“ his *honourable* order in quite as agree-
“ able or brilliant colours as we could
“ wish.”—“ I protest, Mr. Fitz-Albi-
“ ni,” she answered, “ you are quite
“ insufferable. That cold sarcastic
“ manner is not usual to you.”—“ Miss
“ Pickman cannot wonder,” he replied,
“ if my spirits are depressed, or I am
“ less alive to the characters, or con-
“ duct of others, while all my thoughts
“ are called home to my own sorrows ;
“ and uncertain of my future destiny,
“ within a month perhaps I may be em-
“ barked in a line of life for which it
“ is probable that my former habits have
“ totally unfitted me, and, in the en-
“ feebling

“ feebling climate of the Western In-
“ dies, I may soon fall, not gloriously
“ in the field of Honour, but by the
“ ravages of a cruel fever !”

These hints, which Fitz-Albini took the opportunity of throwing out, so alarmed and agitated Miss Pickman, that she could make no answer to him ; but betrayed a paleness and confusion which did not escape the notice of many of the company, especially of Lady Jarr, who had an high opinion of her own powers of finesse and contrivance, and therefore determined to embrace the earliest occasion of acting a part for Miss Pickman, which she believed to be dictated by friendship.

As

As soon, therefore, as the party had assembled in the drawing-room, she sought a moment to begin her negotiation.

“ Mr. Fitz-Albini,” she cried, “ you
“ are a very strange man to shew your-
“ self so insensible to the good fortune
“ that is thrown in your way. There is
“ a lady dying for you; and yet you
“ seem as cold as an Anchorite. I
“ would have you recollect that such a
“ fortune, such a person, such accom-
“ plishments, are not often met with;
“ and I do not know another young
“ man who would not be elated at the
“ flattery you have received. But you
“ draw yourself up so haughtily; you
“ receive every advance with such a
Vol. II. E “ chilling

“chilling reserve, that I am at a loss
“to guess what wild visions can have
“engrossed your mind. Besides, the
“world has considered you, how-
“ever mistaken it may have been,
“already engaged to each other; and
“the injury of such a report where
“it is ill-founded cannot be unknown
“to you.”

“Really,” answered Fitz-Albini, in
some haste as well as confusion, “you
“distress me very much by this un-
“expected conversation. If there be
“such reports, I am not aware that
“I have given cause for them; and all
“I can say is, that they will hasten
“some resolutions as to the line of my
“future

“ future life, which will soon put an
“ end to them.”

“ What do you mean, Mr. Fitz-
“ Albini ?” replied Lady Jarr—“ you
“ cannot with your prospects be so
“ mad as to go and get knocked on
“ the head in the West Indies, or,
“ what is worse, go and die of the
“ Yellow Fever there, merely that you
“ may have the savage delight of break-
“ ing the heart of a woman, who is
“ deeply in love with you. This would
“ be a preposterous piece of vanity,
“ which is unworthy of you.”

“ I intreat you, Madam,” said he,
“ to drop the subject. I cannot believe
“ you serious in supposing any body to

“ be infected with a vanity so ridiculous
“ as you describe.”

“ To what motive then,” she re-
joined, “ am I to impute your very
“ extraordinary behaviour? Am I to
“ suppose you so perverse as to despise
“ an object because it is within your
“ attainment? Am I to consider your
“ fancy filled with the childish notions
“ of romance, and your affections se-
“ duced by the ideal innocence of some
“ cottage-beauty? Or, am I to think,
“ what is still less worthy your under-
“ standing, that the proud streams of
“ Fitz-Albini’s blood are not to mix
“ with the obscure, though rich,
“ currents of plebeian veins?—You
“ may depend upon this, Mr. Fitz-
“ Albini,

“ Albin, that the best blood is that
“ which connects you most with the
“ world, whether by wealth, or con-
“ nections; and that that pedigree,
“ which has been long enough in
“ obscurity to have lost its hold upon
“ the riches or the fashion of the day,
“ is mere nonsense. To have the ad-
“ vantage of knowing the customs and
“ manners of the living world; to have
“ an entrée at court, and the privilege
“ of leaving a ticket of your name at
“ the doors of all that are distinguished
“ by their rank or style of living; is
“ that to which ‘ persons of a certain
“ station’ ought alone to look in the
“ connections they make. This, Mr.
“ Fitz-Albin, you will forgive me
“ for saying, because it results from

“ an attentive observation of life ; and,
“ though nobody admires the splendid
“ talents you possess more than I do,
“ yet, as all brilliant parts are too apt
“ to be led astray by romantic views,
“ you must excuse me for telling
“ you, that you seem sometimes
“ to indulge in a few impracticable
“ notions, which experience will not
“ justify.”

These notions, which none but an intellect totally sunk in folly, and a heart degraded by habitual meanness, could have uttered, Fitz-Albini did not think worth answering. He sat silent, and Lady Jarr believed that her eloquence had flashed conviction upon him. She went on : “ The idea of
“ mar-

“ marrying from mere love, I dare say
“ you will agree with me, is perfectly
“ puerile. The advantages of wealth
“ and alliance, the evils of poverty
“ and obscurity, are felt every day and
“ every hour. Love is a mere creature
“ of the brain, of short duration, that
“ evaporates with the visions on which
“ it was built. The notion of taste and
“ inclination is beneath a person of
“ sense and knowledge of the world !”

“ There, Lady Jarr,” replied Fitz-
Albini, “ I cannot agree with you. I
“ admit that love is very often founded
“ upon ideal excellences in the object
“ of our passion. But I assert that
“ our dislikes arise from a greater
“ certainty, and that no worldly ad-

“vantages can overcome a discordance
“of mind and manners, even where
“there is mutual virtue and forbear-
“ance, neither of which are likely
“long to last in such an union. A
“love-match, therefore, *may not* be
“happy: an interested match, where
“the parties are by nature ill-suited,
“*cannot* be happy!”

“Well,” replied Lady Jarr, surprised at the sharp manner in which he pronounced these words, and tossing her head back with anger, pride, and disappointment, “I thought you had
“been a man of sense; but I find you
“have lived too much in the country
“among your brother squires.—I have
“done!”

She

She rose, and went to another part of the room. Fitz-Albini seized the earliest opportunity of departing, to reflect in private on the thousand difficulties in which he was involved. The conversation of Lady Jarr had left many uneasy ideas upon his mind, which he could not drive away. He could recollect no expressions at any period to Miss Pickman, from which she had a right to suppose him attached to her, or that his intentions of marriage were fixed upon her.

CHAPTER III.

DURING this eventful time, Miss St. Leger had lived at Orleton overwhelmed with anxiety and melancholy. The report of the death of Fitz-Albini's father and mother reached her of course immediately: and she heard the encumbered state, in which the fortune was left, related with numberless exaggerations and falsehoods, which she had no opportunity of detecting. The faint hopes she had sometimes cherished

rished in her bosom now vanished, but did not carry away with them a tendernefs of sentiment towards Fitz-Albini which was increased by the new inhabitant that fucceeded as its companion ; and her affections, ftrange as it may appear, grew more violent under the influence of defpair.

She found her understanding yield all its ftrength to one omnipotent idea, and her frame overcome by a foft languor, to which fhe involuntarily furrendered herfelf. The deepeft fighs were continually efcaping from her bosom, and fhe fat for hours loft in dreams, which made her totally infenfible to the reality around her.

Mrs. Bracey, to whom such a frame of mind was incomprehensible, could not imagine what had happened to her, and perpetually disturbed the delicacy of her feelings by coarse jokes and still coarser reproaches; to which the only reply she made, when she could not command herself, was her tears—tears, which would have softened the malignity of any body but Mrs. Bracey.

The solitary walk to the village, through a lane of which the banks began to be covered with primroses, was her most frequent morning employment. Here she lingered with slow steps, and gave an uninterrupted indulgence to her ideas. She stooped to

to gather the early flowers; and, when the day was genial, sat down on the grass, and, while her senses were gratified with the tender notes of the few birds flitting around, that began to salute the spring, and with the perfumes of the primrose and violet that were already opening on the sunny spots, she felt the most exquisite gratification in her melancholy.

Her person was well known to the peasants and village-children; and her sweet manners, so opposite to the harsh and haughty address of Mrs. Bracey, had made her an universal favourite, so that she never met with any rude or impertinent disturbance. Her very beauty drew a reverential sort of civility;

vility ; and the neighbours paid her a most distant and flattering admiration.

But this mode of spending her time, this indulgence in a kind of fairy-land, did but increase the disease of her heart. She perceived the fortitude of her mind every day to lessen, and a tenderness take possession of her whole frame, which rendered her little capable of struggling with the harsh manners of the house in which she lived. The rough attacks, therefore, and cruel jests, to which she was exposed, totally depressed her.

The predominance of her feelings and her imagination over her reason continued daily to increase the romantic
tinge

tinge of her ideas. The form of Fitz-Albini not only haunted her dreams, but was never absent from her solitary hours. Petrarch became her favourite author: she studied many of his tender sonnets with enthusiastic fondness; and his wild imagery ingrafted itself with all her thoughts.

Mrs. Bracey, dull as she was, could not avoid perceiving an alteration in her countenance and her spirits: but had yet no distinct suspicion of the cause. Yet it was impossible she could be ignorant that Fitz-Albini was a favourite; and therefore, delighting to mortify, she every day entertained her with some fiction or other regarding his marriage, his misconduct, his schemes
of

of going abroad, or his ruin. Sometimes she would start from her chair, hasten to the window, and pretend to see him riding up to the door; and sometimes she would burst into the room, with an invented report, that he had shot himself. All these diabolical arts kept Miss St. Leger's mind in a perpetual succession of perturbations, and added to the flame which was consuming all her worldly peace.

The concealment, which, to such a companion, her delicacy rendered doubly necessary, made the passion prey inwardly upon her heart with increased force. Her damask cheek lost its colour,

lour, and a pale sickly languor reigned over all her countenance.

Mr. Le Strange, a relation of Mr. Bracey, but lately returned from his travels in Italy, came at this time to spend a month or two at Orleton. He was a young man of excellent character, honourable descent, and large fortune. His person was good, his manners polished, and his disposition calm, benevolent, and gentle. But he was diffident, rather slow, and somewhat indolent. He did not therefore instantly shrink from the forward behaviour of Mrs. Bracey with that horror which might have been expected; and the cold timid and reserved looks of Miss St. Leger seemed to excite none of that

that interest which her beauty might reasonably have commanded from him.

Singular as it may seem, this very circumstance threw them often together. Their mutual indifference, which made them careless of each other's good opinion, made them neither seek nor avoid each other; so that in their morning rambles, in which they frequently met, they often became companions.

But it was impossible for a man like Mr. Le Strange to be long in the company of such a woman as Miss St. Leger without perceiving some of her extraordinary attractions. Her elegant taste, her elevated sentiments, would
some-

sometimes break out, notwithstanding her melancholy and her reserve; and he thought he perceived about her a superiority to those showy vanities, by which so very much the greater part of the sex are seduced. A taste for retirement and domestic pleasures was what he so little expected to find in a wife, that he had almost given up the hope of marriage. But, in Miss St. Leger, he fancied he traced such a genuine love of the pleasures of the country, such an unaffected indifference to pomp and parade, that she began to excite a great deal of his attention, and to fill a great deal of his thoughts. Yet, with a cautious disposition and reserved manners, he did not suffer this at all to discover itself. He walked with Miss
St.

St. Leger, sat with her, and talked with her, with the same calm ease as he had done before.

It is dangerous however to play with the darts of Cupid. A slight wound was now made in his heart, which seemed to be sure in its progress, in proportion as it was slow. He began to feel uneasy if he missed her in the accustomed walk; he found his nights haunted by her image, and was impatient at the slowness of time till the hour of breakfast brought him again into her company.

Engrossed by one image, Miss St. Leger perceived not the alteration in Mr. Le Strange's manner and attentions. A quiet unimpressive style of conversation,

tion, and feeble, though just, sentiments, interested her so little, that Mr. Le Strange, when present, (much less when absent,) excited scarce any of her observation. Meanwhile he drank-in poison with his eyes and ears. He gazed upon her languid but beautiful countenance: he heard the occasional bursts of an elevated mind. With trembling and humble adoration he continued to attend her walks, and hear, without observation, the deep sighs that seemed frequently to rise from the bottom of her heart.

“ Miss St. Leger,” said he, one day, to Mrs. Bracey, with an awkward hesitation, “ seems an amiable girl. What
“ is her history? I have been so long
“ abroad

“ abroad that I am ashamed to confess
“ I do not recollect her family, though
“ I am aware she is a relation of Mr.
“ Bracey’s mother ; and I, you know,
“ am related to him on his father’s side.
“ Whoever she may be, I have seldom
“ seen any one so handsome and so sensible.”

“ Really, Mr. Le Strange,” replied
Mrs. Bracey, “ these are warm expressions for you. I believe you are in love,
“ though you are the last man I should
“ have expected to be caught. However,
“ the girl is a good girl, but rather poor.”

“ Poor ! Madam,” he answered, with
more quickness than was usual to him,
“ surely that is no defect in her.”

“ Oh

“ Oh no : not at all, Mr. Le
“ Strange, if you don't think so ; that
“ is your affair : and, as for blood,
“ she has a great deal of the high
“ blood in her that you pedigree-
“ mongers are so fond of. I don't
“ know how many kings and poor lords
“ are counted among her ancestors ;
“ though their ghosts have not been so
“ good as to pay for her dancing and
“ drawing-masters, and had left the
“ poor thing destitute, if it had not
“ been for Mr. Bracey and me !”

“ But, seriously, Mrs. Bracey,”
cried he, “ do tell me her history.”

“ Seriously then, Mr. Le Strange,”
she answered, “ Miss St. Leger is one
I “ of,

“ of, what you call, your high-born,
“ that is, poor sort of a good sort of a
“ destitute kind of a girl ! Her father
“ had a tolerable fortune, which he
“ spent ; and her mother, one of the
“ poor proud cousins of a poor proud
“ duke, pined, and broke her heart,
“ and there was an end of her. But,
“ if you want to know the particulars
“ of these things, I must refer you to
“ Mr. Bracey ; for I never trouble my
“ head with such stuff, for my part,
“ not I !”

At that moment entered Mr. Jackson,
a cousin and familiar of Mrs. Bracey,
who had lately returned from the East-
Indies, or some of the factories, with
the reputation of a considerable fortune.

He

He was a dull, rude, ignorant, crafty, jealous, suspicious, man, with a pride which exceeded all his other passions, except his avarice, and not an idea of any other pre-eminence but that of wealth. Having lived all his life in counting-houses, he knew nothing of the world; and his ignorance made him suspicious of every body, so that he always sat in company, not very well known to him, with a leering look, which those who were acquainted with his temper often saw redden, and then grow pale again, as he took offence at the conversation that was going forward, though he had not the boldness to dissent to what he disapproved. But, such was the malignity of his nature, that he never expressed pleasure except

at the abuse of other people; on such occasions, he could not suppress his exultation, but

Grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile:
and so universal was his hatred, that there did not exist a human being, in whose degradation he did not delight. The slightest praise of another seemed poison to his heart. In short, he was one of the most shocking instances of our fallen and depraved nature, and the power of Satan, which I ever knew. I have seen men stained by occasional crimes, perhaps of a frightful nature, in whom the heart would sometimes melt, and there would be temporary radiations of goodness; but in him all was dark, savage, unrelenting, and full of anger.

Mrs.

Mrs. Bracey and he, when they met, always joined against what they called the family-cabal, and offensive old-fashioned prejudices of Mr. Bracey and his relations. As he entered the room, therefore, overhearing something of the turn of Mrs. Bracey's conversation, he instantly asked what she was talking about, and then burst into an abuse of Miss St. Leger, and a ridicule of Mr. Bracey, for "ever filling the foolish girl's head with any ideas about her empty pedigree."

"There, there is that coxcomb, that Mr. Fitz-Albini, I think they call him," continued he: "I never met with such a foolish puppy in my life, never,—talking his stuff about his

“ghostly old house, and not liking to
 “part with it because his fathers have
 “lived there; and then giving himself
 “airs, and pouting, and looking big,
 “and uttering his opinion before better
 “men—why, he is not worth a farthing,
 “I tell you—his estates are all mort-
 “gaged for more than they are worth.
 “Go upon 'Change, can you find him
 “there? Look into the Bank-books,
 “can you find his name there? Then
 “how should he know any thing?
 “What right has he to talk,—a foolish,
 “ignorant, hateful, fellow!”

I never saw such triumph in any bo-
 dy's countenance as appeared in Mrs.
 Bracey's, while this was uttering. She
 laughed, and looked up, and looked
 down again, and then was so inwardly
 con-

convulsed, that it seemed as if she would have dropped off her chair, and, when it was finished, she cried, in a shrill voice, "Very true, Mr. Jackson, very true! But there is this gentleman here, and my clever husband, won't quite agree with you!"

"The devil they won't," cried Mr. Jackson, reddening, and picking his nails. "I beg the gentleman's pardon: but I would not give him my new coach for all he is worth, after paying his just debts—and, what become of his airs then? What are his fine ancestors then for? Will they help him to a slice in the new loan? Will they buy him a few cool thousands in the three per cents, when they are

“ below fifty ? Will they give him a
“ vote in the India-house ? Will they
“ enable him to make a bustle among
“ the new-shipping and old-shipping
“ interests ? If not, where 's his sense ?
“ Where 's his consequence ? What
“ right has he to open his mouth ? I
“ have heard he writes verses. I sup-
“ pose he will not bring that as a proof
“ of his understanding ; for, we may
“ always have enough of them sort of
“ things of the bellman ! ”

Mr. Le Strange heard all this disgraceful effervescence of venomous vulgarity with an astonishment that almost made him doubt his own ears, and with a dignified contempt turned from him without a reply, and walked out of
the

the room. This gratified Mrs. Bracey, whose stupidity induced her to think the victory was with herself and Mr. Jackson, with whom she continued to gratify her spleen in similar conversations for another hour.

Mr. Le Strange took the earliest opportunity to enquire the history of Miss St. Leger from Mr. Bracey, of whose account the following is the result.

Miss St. Leger's father was descended from one of the most antient families in the kingdom, one of those very few who can be proved to have come from Normandy with the Conqueror: nothing being more absurd and void of evidence than almost every preten-

sion to this degree of antiquity; very few surnames, as Domesday-book demonstrably proves, having existed so long ago, or even so far back as the reign of Henry II. as is evident from a catalogue of the great land-holders in that reign, called *The Black Book of the Exchequer*. The Roll of Battle-Abbey, to which vulgar people and half-learned antiquaries are continually referring, is well known to judicious critics to be a vile and ignorant forgery of after-times, whereby the crafty monks flattered their benefactors. Yet the name of St. Leger in cotemporary historians in Normandy, as well as England, puts the antiquity of that family beyond all question. Mr. St. Leger inherited the mighty relics of a vast feudal

feudal estate, encumbered with a variety of charges and law-suits, which a life of prudence, exertion, and knowledge of business, might have extricated from all its fetters. But his volatile temper was ill-calculated to manage a large rental, which gave him the appearance of a noble income, without really affording him any thing to spend. He shrunk from the Herculean labour, became a prey to the rascally impositions of attorneys and agents, and, in the fever of anxiety and disappointment, fell into a consumption, which, however, did not close his sorrows before it became necessary to endure the aggravation of parting with all his estates during the dreadful distress of the American war; after which he lingered but a few

F 5 months,

months, leaving a destitute widow and orphan-daughter, of whom grief soon brought the former to her grave, while the latter, yet too young to know her misfortunes, was still surviving to lament her cruel destiny. Her mother was sprung from a most noble house, which united in its veins not only all the blood of the old nobility, but repeated alliances with the royal houses of Plantagenet and Tudor. Nor were her personal qualities less remarkable than her descent was illustrious. She was beautiful, accomplished, and, in the highest degree, amiable and virtuous. Yet all these could neither save the estates from falling a prey to the harpies of extortion and fraud; from Eastern murderers; contractors; usurers; and the

the watchful tribe of bargain-hunters, who drink the blood of sorrow and necessity; nor would they save the broken-hearted sufferer from the ignominy and neglect that attend those on whom poverty has put her repressive mark. Miss St. Leger's grandfather had followed the fortunes of James II. and her great-grandfather had fallen with Lord Falkland and other noble heroes at the battle of Newbury, in the time of Charles I. leaving his estates encumbered in the service of his royal master with the first of those large debts, from which they had never entirely recovered.

Mr. Le Strange's prejudices in favour of Miss St. Leger were not lessened by

F 6

this

this affecting narrative. The next morning he solicitously sought to accompany her in her walk.

“Who is Mr. Jackson,” said he to her, “whom I yesterday saw here with Mrs. Bracey?”

“I know but little of him,” said she;
“but he is one of those upstart, purse-
“proud, insolent, wretches, who will
“be the ruin of this country. I can-
“not think how Mrs. Bracey can be
“so fond of him!”

“That is not so great a wonder to
“me,” replied he. ‘Birds of a fea-
‘ther’—“you know, Miss St. Leger,
“to make use of a vulgar proverb!

“But

“ But where could such a creature
 “ spring from? How fast the rage for
 “ equality is coming on, when any
 “ fortune can obtain an introduction
 “ in polished company for such an
 “ animal !”

“ He is beneath your contempt, Mr.
 “ Le Strange,” she answered calmly.

“ I sometimes feel that such a man
 “ is, as you observe,” cried he, “ to
 “ be treated with silent scorn; but,
 “ when I consider the increasing in-
 “ fluence that is given to wealth how-
 “ ever acquired, the rapidity with
 “ which property is transferred from
 “ the antient possessors to the worst of
 “ mankind, and the impossibility, ac-
 “ cording

“ cording to the present financial sys-
 “ tem of government, of any fortune
 “ being preserved at its old height
 “ without a recruit from trade, which
 “ would destroy the independence, the
 “ liberality, and the unfulled charac-
 “ ter of an antient race ; and what is
 “ still more frightful, even admitting
 “ such fortunes could be stationary, the
 “ loss of their power, by the oversha-
 “ dowing heaps of wealth accumulated
 “ by stock-jobbers, loan-contractors,
 “ army and navy-contractors, and East-
 “ Indians—when I consider all this, I
 “ fear that silent scorn will not pro-
 “ tect us from the incalculable evils,
 “ of which the manners of such men
 “ are the prognostications—evils, which
 “ are

“are the certain forerunners either of
“despotism, or anarchy!”

“You treat the matter very seriously
“indeed, Mr. Le Strange!” answered
she.

“Alas! Miss Leger,” he replied,
“you have reason, unless I am misin-
“formed, to feel it even more seriously
“than I do. But I could not bear to
“hear that fellow Jackson abuse a gen-
“tleman whose very name prejudiced
“me in his favour, when the only
“ground which I could understand of
“his abuse was, that he had dared to
“speak his opinion when he was not as
“rich as himself. But it is always so
“with these scoundrels: they talk about
“freedom

“freedom and equality, when they are
 “themselves the proudest and most de-
 “spotic wretches that ever infested
 “the earth!”

“What was the gentleman’s name,
 “Mr. Le Strange?” she cried.

“Fitz-Albini!” he answered.

Miss St. Leger turned very pale, and
 walked on without uttering a word, and
 had got a few paces before him without
 knowing what she was about.

“For Heaven’s sake!” he exclaimed,
 “what is the matter, Miss St. Leger?”
 “You are running on, as if you was
 “frightened: there is nothing behind
 “you!”

“you! But do you know this Mr.

“Fitz-Albini?”

“A little, Sir,” she answered, with a faint hesitation.

“Is he related to you?”

“No, Sir.”

“Where does he live?”

“At Dallington, Sir.”

“Is he a good kind of man?”

“I believe so, Sir,”

“Is he married?”

“I—I—

“ I—I— be—be—lieve not, Sir,” in a tremulous voice which was scarce able to articulate the words.

“ Upon my word, Miss St. Leger,” continued he, in a voice almost as agitated as her own, “ this must be some
“ very interesting gentleman, to whose
“ name you pay the compliment of
“ such evident emotion.”

She was silent, and hastened forward to hide a tear, which she could not suppress, and which, as it did not escape the awakened attention of Mr. Le Strange, pointed a dagger at his heart.

Both returned to the house agitated and unhappy, without exchanging another

ther word. Miss St. Leger flew up into her room, and discharged the fulness of her bosom in tears. Le Strange, feeling the pangs of a wrestless dæmon in his breast, which had never entered there before, found himself incapable of sitting still, but again sallied into the park, and walked, now quick, now slow, scarcely knowing whither he was hurrying, till the dark coming on warned him of the hour, and by the time he got back to Orleton the dinner was over, and the house in some wonder and uneasiness what could have become of him.

He entered the room in evident agitation and embarrassment; while Miss St. Leger perceiving she had affronted him,

him, yet not knowing why, made every gentle and winning effort to appease his anger, which soon yielded to her soft seductive attentions.

Yet these attentions but added new poison to his heart. When he retired at night, the conflict of his passions was great; his tenderness was increased; but the uneasy pangs of a recurring jealousy were not removed. The name of Fitz-Albini crossed his mind frequently, like a flash of lightning. And he wished, yet was afraid, to enquire of Mr. or Mrs. Bracey concerning him.

But Mrs. Bracey herself began now to perceive Mr. Le Strange's growing attentions to Miss St. Leger; and it ill-
sued

suited the envy and malignity of her heart to see her protégé married to a man of such indisputable fortune as well as family! This, together with the delight she had in carrying on all plots, and thwarting all schemes, and the pleasure she always received from the presence of Fitz-Albini, of whose person she always had an high admiration, induced her to send a pressing letter to Dallington, and draw if possible its melancholy inhabitant into another visit at Orleton. This plan acquired an additional zest, from reflecting on the pain and alarm it would cause to the Pickman family, whom she herself could find some anonymous means of informing of it.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BRACEY'S letter found Fitz-Albini returned, as she hoped, to the country. Here he had lived for more than a month without conversing with a single individual. The variety of feelings, the variety of distractions that pressed upon his heart and head, had almost overpowered his reason. Anonymous accusations of him for a perfidious desertion of Miss Pickman after seducing her affections; anonymous letters of tenderness pretending to be written by her friends, and inviting him
to

to embrace the prize which fortune had thrown in his way ; continually arrived, to add to his perplexities.

Rumours were industriously circulated that his estates were all on sale ; and he actually saw prying land-jobbers *, and purse-proud cut-throats * from the East-Indies, as he pursued his walks, often traversing his land, and examining from a distance his mansion.

It required more fortitude than he often possessed, to investigate with a scrutinizing nicety the state of his affairs. He was too well acquainted with public matters, and the schemes of nati-

* Alas ! this truly unjustifiable impertinence is not confined to such persons ! 29 March, 1799.

onal finance, to be ignorant how very unpropitious for the peculiar state of his own fortune the present period was. He owned the outlines of a large estate, very strongly endeared to him by the possession of a long line of ancestors : and it was very clear that, at any other period than the present, there must have remained an ample surplus above all its incumbrances. If he could retain the estates therefore, œconomy and self-denial would soon put an end to all his difficulties. But this required credit and confidence ;—not a credit and confidence, by which any one would be deceived, or run hazards, but such as would be for the mutual benefit of all parties. The immense and unproportional burdens which the operation

tion

tion of certain new taxes* imposed upon such a fortune not according to its real, but its nominal ability; the ruinous sums which he was called on to pay for the unproductive remnants of antient hospitality and grandeur, or the alternative of an appeal, which would at once (however improperly) annihilate that credit and confidence †, which has been

* Written March 26, 1798.—The most enlightened, as well as boldest, financier, who ever guided the reins of any government, has since admitted this, by substituting the tax on INCOME, a plan so bold, wise, and equitable in the outline, and so triumphant over difficulties, hitherto deemed insuperable, in its details, as far exceeds the praise of my feeble pen.

Feb. 23, 1799.

† It is only to be regretted, that, in the tax on INCOME, the secrecy allowed to persons in

been stated to be so absolutely necessary for giving him time to emerge from the loads that oppressed him—brought before him prospects so gloomy, that he had seldom the resolution to contemplate them steadily.

If he felt most deeply for himself under these circumstances, he yet was not so confined as to be exempt from the most severe anxiety as to the constitutional consequences of this system. He objected to income as a subject of taxation, because the evidences of it *must be* (or at least the evidences adopted *were*) not only highly fallacious, but alarm-

trade, by means of the commercial commissioners, has not been extended to landed, and indeed all, property.—*Feb. 23, 1799.*

ingly

ingly oppressive to the most useful and already most-endangered ranks of our mixed (and once well-poised) government. “Our constitution stands on a “nice equipoise,” says Burke, “with “steep precipices, and deep waters upon “all sides of it. In removing it from a “dangerous leaning towards one side, “there may be a risque of oversetting “it on the other. Every project of a “material change in a government so “complicated as ours, combined at the “same time with circumstances still “more complicated, is a matter full “of difficulties, in which a confide- “rate man will not be too ready to “decide; a prudent man too ready to “undertake; or an honest man too “ready to promise. They do not re-

“spect the public, nor themselves, who
“engage for more than they are sure
“they ought to attempt, or that they
“are able to perform *.”

While under the pressure of melancholy at such a train of ideas, he one day wrote the following hasty lines.

* Thoughts on the present Discontents, p. 99.
3d edit. 1770, 8vo.

Lines by A. F. on the TIMES.

BLACK scowls the sky ; descends the drizzling rain ;

In mournful tones the hollow winds complain ;

And over every scene her sable wings

The sombre goddess Melancholy flings.

My bosom catches the contagious woe ;

And sadness only from my lips will flow.

Where are my youthful dreams, my joyous days,

My name with honours crown'd, my head with
bays ?

Fled, like all visions !—Vanish'd is the veil ;

And what a groupe behind of spectres pale,

Grim-visag'd shapes, and grinning forms, appear !

See broken-hearted Grief, and trembling Fear ;

And wan Neglect, and shivering Want, and Scorn,

And black-brow'd, blood-stain'd Malice ; Shame
forlorn ;

And iron-fang'd Extortion; and mad Strife;
Hold the sole fway o'er every path of life!
O whither shall I bend my aching eyes!
Where shall I find less frightful prospects rise!
From scenes of private sorrow let me turn,
The comforts of the public weal to learn!
There bankrupt nations; bleeding monarchs
there;

And famine end the people murders spare—
Cities laid low there civil discord scourge,
And Ruin o'er the whole her ploughshare urge,
Affrighted I behold!—and shake with awe,
As the dire dæmons near and nearer draw!—
My Country, O my Country! that, sublime,
Hast borne thy head above the waves of time,
Which, as they beat against thy mighty shores,
New bulwarks brought, in wisdom's added
stores!

At length thy fate approaches: omens croak,
And hollow sounds portend the coming stroke;
Trembles the ground; and hideous birds of prey
Cross us by fits, and shrieks of joy betray!—

—Chiefs

—Chiefs in command, who would outstand the
storm,

And call new props, and new defences form,
Beware, ye thoughtless, how ye draw your aid
From quarters, which, if weak and open laid,
New breaches to the furious blast will shew,
Till unsuspected comes destruction's blow.
Props of the state, your ancient gentry gone,
By whom, in easy cords of union drawn,
A virtuous useful peasantry, content,
Their toils industrious to the public lent;
From whom, the mind enlarg'd, the lofty soul,
By birth and study freed from base controul
Of griping avarice, and selfish gain,
Rises, a senate's glory to maintain,
What shall the loss supply?—From yonder seas,
Mark the gay vessel drive before the breeze;
See on the shore the gorgeotts Nabob land;
The wealthy cargo blackens all the strand;—
Oh mark! the fallow wretch, tho' dress'd so gay,
Leaves prints of blood he cannot wash away!
He comes to feed our wants, our lands to buy;
Of making laws the labor to supply;

Gold palaces to build, and wide to throw
The doors of feast, and revelry, and show;
The narrow bounds of neighbourhood destroy,
And thro' a county spread the general joy!
Nor yet contented: lest Profusion pour
Too deeply from th' incalculable store,
Plutus * he re-invokes; and now to kings
His loans of millions the sharp usurer brings,
Till what exhausted India's shrieking plain
With rapine, famine, and with blood to gain,
Seem like light baubles, which his scorn excite,
To think they e'er could fill his appetite!—
Then wakes the lute of Merriment again,
And breathes Seduction o'er the listening plain;
Then healthy Competence, and Labor strong,
Lords of themselves no more, admire the song;

* Late events will probably make the intelligent reader smile at this.—But Avarice frequently defeats itself—200,000l. gained by a single speculation, added to possessions already amounting to 300,000l.—and all sunk in the fathomless abyss of this demon! *Yet such things are!* 23 Feb. 1799.

And

And village-beauty, for the charms of drefs,
Yields to the fwarthy wretch a loath'd carefs.
The echoing hall, which pendant honours grace,
For many an age the trophies of the chace,
And prouder ftill, the mighty fpoils of war,
Won in old days with many a glorious fcar,
Despis'd, deserted, and the homely board
Which once could hofpitable joys afford,
Scorn'd, till the generous heart, to fame a prey,
Opes all its veins, and bleeds its life away—
The echoing hall, in many a fragment rude
Wide o'er the weed-grown dreary vill is ftrew'd;
And fields, that nurs'd heroic chiefs, and fed
Full many a hardy foldier, whom they led,
No more at induftry's or honor's call,
Lifelefs to the all-grafping monfter fall.—
Then, proud, the new-fprung lord in bloated
power
O'er a whole county bids his palace tower,
While as its glittering heights affail the fky,
Thro' the wide tracks, beneath its ken that lie,

Nought but the vile hut of the lonely hind,
Rude and half-cloath'd, the searching eye can
find.

At length the bubble bursts : th' aërial pile,
Built on the basis of extorted toil ;
Of trade, where after all the peril o'er,
Another comes, and seizes half the store,—
Sinks,—and the tight-drawn cord of union broke,
Kingdoms rush headlong at a single stroke !

But the powers of his fancy were
weakened by his constant uneasiness ;
and no subject could take such possession
of his mind as long to keep him
from his own sorrows.

The ingratitude of some, and the
meannefs of others of his acquaintance,
who,

who, formerly having paid him a full some attention, now that he was supposed to be poor or out of repute in the world, thunned him at a moment he was displaying more amiable qualities both of the head and heart, more real greatness of soul than he could have had an opportunity of discovering before, affected him but little. They did not escape his observation; but they excited his scorn.

The image of Miss St. Leger arrayed itself in greater brilliance as the chaos of his mind increased; and, like the radiance of the sun that sets amid surrounding clouds, gained a double force from the contrast. But a union with her, and a preservation of those

estates which his own affection for them made him anxious to keep, and the dying request of his father made it his duty to use every effort to retain, seemed scarcely possible. Two contrary wishes therefore, each extremely near his heart, were perpetually harraffing and rending it.

Amid these sufferings no woods could be too deep for his rambles, no wilds too rude, and no tempests too fearful. He wandered out on stormy nights, and lost himself among the groaning forests. When the moon only shone forth at intervals through the driving clouds, he strolled forth into the most pathless solitudes of the park. The servants having long remonstrated in vain, and
now

now habituated to these incontrollable humours, yet often sat in silent and anxious suspense for his return. But Providence protected him ; and by such indulgences he frequently allayed the fever of his brain.

Often of a dark and windy night had he gone forth, and never stopped his impetuous steps till he reached the pales of Orleton, where after breathing a few moments on the stepping-stile, he set forward again, traversed many times unseen under the windows of Miss St. Leger's chamber, and then returned as he came ; but not till the morning light began to break before he reached his own house, where he entered with disordered looks, which yet the pleasure
of

of his safe return counterbalanced in his affectionate servants!

Such was the state in which Mrs. Bracey's letter found him. He accepted the invitation with an eager, yet doubtful kind of pleasure; and the next day he hastened with a palpitating heart to dinner at Orleton.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

AS Fitz-Albini entered the drawing-room at Orleton, where the party were assembled before dinner, the countenance of Miss St. Leger, now pale, now red, betrayed to the enquiring eyes of Mr. Le Strange the certainty of a tale, which it was indescribable torment to him to know. Fitz-Albini himself saw only at first with a mist before his eyes through which he could scarce distinguish the persons in the room ;

room ; while Mrs. Bracey received no common delight from the very apparent emotions of the three. Her ferret eyes sparkled ; and as usual she uttered a sort of hysteric suppressed laugh, which seemed to be struggling in her throat.

The hatred with which the generous heart of Le Strange now for the first time found itself poisoned, was insufferable pain to him. Nor could he forgive himself for feeling dislike to a man, whom he was conscious under any other circumstances he should have admired, and been proud to call his friend.

Miss

Miss St. Leger, on the other hand, conscious whither her inclinations led, studiously endeavoured to conceal them by overacted attentions to Le Strange, whom yet, while they often endangered the anger of Fitz-Albini, they were much too formal to satisfy.

Fitz-Albini, from similar motives, endeavoured to be more than commonly attentive to Mrs. Bracey, who, in her eager delight at his civilities, forgot for a moment her own schemes, and left Le Strange to pursue his attachment uninterrupted.

But, while such cross-purposes were going forward, the party separated at night dissatisfied; and met the next morning

morning with gloomy or distressed countenances.

To Fitz-Albini the night had been feverish as usual, and his dreams a mixture of delight and sorrow. At the meeting of the preceding day Miss St. Leger's person had appeared to him more charming than ever. Her languid eyes, her tremulous voice, her elegant and interesting manners, had made a new impression on him. And there were looks he had sometimes caught, which were constantly playing in his imagination.

Yet there was something in the manner of Mr. Le Strange, whom he had not known before, with which he was
not

not at all satisfied. As he entered the breakfast-room, the eyes of Miss St. Leger, which had been evidently swelled with tears, met his. Each drew them from the other with the most palpable distress, which was neither unobserved by Mrs. Bracey, nor Mr. Le Strange. The former saw it with pleasure, the latter with a sickness of heart.

Every day Mrs. Bracey contrived some scheme to play off the lovers against each other, and to add fuel to the flame, of which she was totally indifferent to the consequences, even though it should consume them all. In the mean time, she wrote anonymous letters to Miss Pickman, relating with the utmost triumph, and in the most artful

artful colours, Fitz-Albini's attachment to her rival, whom she at the same time accused of the basest manœuvres to seduce his affections. While at those moments she believed *his* love to be the most susceptible of the acutest sufferings, she wrote other anonymous letters to *him*, both complaining of his desertion of Miss Pickman, and the faithlessness and duplicity of the other.

Fitz-Albini's passion, and the tortures of his mind, continued under these circumstances to increase together. And, as it is the property of love

“ To hope, tho' hope were lost,

“ Tho' Heaven and Earth thy passion crost,”

so he, with prospects the most gloomy, went on with the indulgence of some
faint

faint rays of future happiness. The beautiful person of Miss St. Leger, her interesting manners, and the tender flattering attentions which at some moments he interpreted to be peculiar to himself, absorbed all his soul, and made any difficulties appear more endurable than the idea of losing her.

But yet it was impossible for a moment to forget these difficulties. The thought of selling Dallington, the remembrance of his father's dying request, always hung with an overwhelming weight upon his mind, and gave to his countenance and his manners the character of the deepest melancholy.

The following sonnet, written at this time, pictures the state of his mind.

SONNET.

SONNET.

Where o'er the sea Night's blackest shadows form,
And on the founding shore the surges crowd,
The flash, that issues from the parting cloud,
Gleams but to shew the horrors of the storm :
Deeper the shades condense: the troubled wave
With louder thunder rolls ; then, as again
Breaks a new flash across the fearful main,
With gather'd force the tempest seems to rave.
'Tis thus to me the momentary ray
Of tender Hope, that springs within my breast,
Appears in gloomy colours to betray
The groupe of dæmons that my path infest !
—O rather wrap this heart, consum'd with
care,
E'en in th' impervious shades of dark despair !

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VI.

THE anxiety which Miss St. Leger, as well as Fitz-Albini, suffered at this time cannot be described. Her attachment, as well as his, grew every moment, while he had yet made no declaration to her, which authorized her affections, or relieved her from that perpetual doubt of a mutual return which is among the cares that most deeply sadden the heart.

Poor

Poor Le Strange's passion, while it rendered himself miserable, and was a persecution to her, had however, by the manner in which it excited Mrs. Bracey's envy, been extremely instrumental in favouring the wishes of Fitz-Albini.

It cannot be expected that Fitz-Albini could resist such frequent opportunities of expressing an attachment, of which the vehemence became now incontrollable. Nor can it be expected that Miss St. Leger, who had now been convinced that the report of his engagement to Miss Pickman was ill-founded, should hear without tender, though delicate and tremulous, delight, the avowal of his love. The idea of
his

his ruined fortune appeared nothing to her; and she was pleased at the apparent proof of her disinterested affection, since in Mr. Le Strange an union of wealth, as well as family and character, was at her command.

But had Fitz-Albini, with such a mind and such manners, been even penniless, it would have weighed nothing with her. She loved, she admired, she idolized him. Yet she had had an exquisite delicacy, a feminine reserve, which prevented her from betraying those feelings, even to him.

Mrs. Bracey soon discovered the secret of their engagement, and was delighted at the success of her own
VOL. II. H schemes.

schemes. But as the novelty ceased, the pleasure evaporated. The fever of her brain required some new perplexities; and her next employment was, to crown with unhappiness the plot which herself had contrived.

There were moments in which the uneasiness of Fitz-Albini conquered all the delight he felt in the success of his love. His father's dying words rung in his ears—and Dallington in the possession of another was an image which gave him all the horrors of a guilty conscience.

This melancholy was not unperceived by Miss St. Leger. It was a dreadful alloy to the pleasure of her present situation.

ation. But it would have been indelicate too early to pry into all the secrets of his heart, or to endeavour to extract the thorn. By silent and quiet attentions alone did she at present attempt to soothe him.

The time arrived when it became necessary that he should return home to the vexatious employment of arranging, as far as it was in his power, his perplexed affairs. All his resolution was insufficient for a long while to tear him away from such society to such a task; a task the more insufferable, because he knew that, the more he became acquainted with his own circumstances, the greater would the evils appear of the scheme, of which he was now flattering

himself with the delightful hopes, and on which all his happiness depended.

His father's last remonstrance gained a double force upon his mind as he re-entered Dallington; and he was resolved to make any struggle except giving up Miss St. Leger, to comply with it. But he found so many pressing letters of attorney, he perceived so many schemes of chicane and extortion, that he began almost to despair. He observed that many, who had been patient while they supposed the marriage with Miss Pickman to be going forward, had now probably heard of his engagement to Miss St. Leger, for they became more clamorous than others.

He

He lamented his destiny; for, on every side he saw nothing but the darkest clouds of sorrow. His father's countenance, sometimes covered with frowns, and sometimes with tears, haunted all his dreams; and he seemed to meet him even at the ends of walks—and to hear his awful voice in the solitude of the park. His own attachment to Dallington and its appendages, which were all interwoven with his existence, was so violent, that to have been forcibly separated from their possession would have broken his heart. What must now have been his complicated sufferings!

Under the pressure of such anxieties when the most distant ray of hope

H 3 seemed

seemed shut from him, a letter arrived to inform him, that a Mr. Bassett of Orlingham-Park, in a distant county, had died intestate, and possessed of a large estate, to which, as there was no near heir, it was supposed that Fitz-Albini was entitled by the marriage of his ancestor with one of that family in the beginning of the last century. Fitz-Albini, who well remembered that such a match was recorded in his pedigree, but had never kept up any acquaintance with the intestate, nor knew enough of his family to suspect he had no nearer relations, received this account with inexpressible delight.

He wrote a note to Miss St. Leger, in which hinting that some intelligence of
a business

a business advantageous to him had occurred, without saying much because he was unwilling to raise her expectations too high, he told her, that he was called to another part of the kingdom for a short time. Having done this, he immediately set off for Orlingham-Park, where, from the intelligence he procured, reasonable hopes were entertained that no person was better entitled to the estate than himself. He found that the amount of it was not less than six thousand pounds a year, old rents, and very improveable.

After enjoying himself a fortnight in the mansion here, and riding over all the estates, he set out on his return, having experienced sensations of delight, and a

calm kind of happiness, such as he had never before known.

The kindness of Providence now seemed to have relieved him from the depth of his misery ; and to have showered down upon him unexpectedly riches, which to him were of a thousand times more value than for the purpose of rolling in luxuries, and indulging in expensive pleasures. No circumstance had yet occurred that gave a hint of any competitor to the claim ; and he found the attorney and steward more honest and intelligent than such persons generally are ; and, as it seemed, highly delighted with his character and manners, and very anxious that he should meet

meet with no obstacles in being put into final possession of the fortune.

As it was probable he would be detained in London on his return, he wrote an account to Miss St. Leger of what had happened. He described the house and the circumstances of the estate, and expressed, perhaps in too sanguine a manner, his hope that there was no nearer claimant to it.

Miss St. Leger received this letter with delight, which was however too much lessened by the sudden alteration of the behaviour of Mrs. Bracey, who, having already heard the report of this sudden reverse of the fortune of Fitz-

H 5

Albini,

Albini, became vehemently malignant and envious.

The frowns, the taunts, the persecution, the hourly reports of new claimants, the rancorous abuse of Fitz-Albini, which the poor girl now underwent, cannot easily be described. At the same time every art was used to excite her uneasiness and jealousy, and to induce her to believe that, with the fortune of her lover, the sentiments would also change. A letter was written to her, which assumed to come from a friend, advising her to be on her guard, as it could be proved that Fitz-Albini was engaged to Miss Pickman, and that his only pursuit of herself was to make her his mistress. The most sly endeavours

vours were used to touch her pride, to alarm her delicacy, and to pique her generosity. Her spirit was called on, to answer if she could submit to hold by the tie of former promises a hand, after circumstances had so altered that it could not be accompanied with the heart.

Harassed, perplexed, distracted, she lamented the hour of Fitz-Albini's good fortune. She wished again for that poverty which had seemed such an insupportable evil; while there were moments at which the purity of her affection prompted her to write him a letter, absolving him from his engagements; and to fly to some obscure retreat, where, during the short remainder of her

H 6 life,

life, she might live upon the thoughts of his happiness.

These resolves however were not put into execution.—But Fitz-Albini received in London from her an answer to his letter which seeming cold and laconic for such an occasion gave a strange revulsion to his feelings. Nor was their first meeting at Orleton, on his return, when such wicked pains had been taken to alienate them from each other, without a great deal of mutual distrust.

Hints had been thrown out to Fitz-Albini, that during his absence she had been on the point of breaking her engagement with him in favour of Le Strange, and that the news
of

of his good fortune arriving at a critical moment had alone induced her to abandon her intentions; yet not without a reluctance, which they artfully insinuated might account for the coldness of style, and sentiments of her answer.

No means were left untried to blow the spark of discord which seemed to have arisen between them. Each suffered in private: but one was too proud, and one too delicate, to make advances to the other. Yet, while this reserve continued, the health of each suffered. The pallid looks of Miss St. Leger especially were alarming; and while these looks gave Fitz-Albini the greatest uneasiness, he experienced other causes of anxiety from various reports, by which
it

it was evident there was a probability of other claimants to the Baffett estate; and it could not escape his penetration, that there seemed some secret and rascally manoeuvres going forward, by which unfair means would be attempted to defeat him of his right.

These suspicions, however, did not give him the pain which he received from the ill-health and behaviour of Miss St. Leger. She sought every opportunity to be alone; nor could he induce her to accompany him in his walks, nor, though it was certain she often walked herself, was he ever so lucky as to meet with her in her rambles. He had even momentary fits of jealousy, and suspected that on these occasions she

she had appointments with Le Strange. This induced him to watch her with more earnestness; and one day he thought he tracked her to a distant solitary stream in the park, where the banks were high, and covered with a deep wood, through which he was led by a circuitous path that was but little trod. Just as he emerged upon the river, he once fancied he saw the glimpse of a female figure: but it vanished in an instant. On his reaching the spot, the broken arm of a tree on the bank of the stream seemed to have been used as a seat, and he thought he heard a rustling in the wood, as if the person was not far distant. He pushed forward; but the path was so winding that he could see but a little way before him; and no human

human being could now be perceived. Two paths seemed now to open, and he was even doubtful of his track ; when, in endeavouring to trace a late footstep, he saw, on the ground before him, something white, which on his approach appeared to be a loose paper lately dropped, and by a sudden breeze was carried forward several yards before he could catch it. He had no sooner hold of it, than he recognized the writing of Miss St. Leger, and at the instant averted his eyes with a palpitation that almost prevented his breathing, lest it should betray to him some fatal secret which it would be death to him to know. At length his curiosity prevailed.—“ Shall I not,” said he, “ read “ it ?—yes—I am so circumstanced as “ to

“to be entitled to know the secrets
 “of her heart. Perhaps Providence
 “has thrown it in my way.”—He read
 it.—It contained the following lines
 written with a pencil.

SONNET.

Break, foolish heart : nor let thy woes be known !

Ye tears, that down my pallid cheeks distream,

Be sacred, nor betray my secret moan !

Idol, to whom my lips in every dream

Will mutter uncontroul'd their fervid vows,

O cruel, come not thou my slumbers near,

Left at such sacred hours as these thou hear

What love on thee my babbling tongue bestows !

No: let the torrents of my swollen eyes

Be lost unnotic'd in this lonely flood !

Away, ye murmurs, and ye bursting sighs,

Mix with the blasts of this untrodden wood !

Thus

Thus Peace shall gradual come to my relief,
And Death record the patience of my grief.

Fitz-Albini read these lines over three or four times, and then after a pause referred to them again, before the flutter of his heart began to subside. They might admit of a doubtful interpretation: yet his tenderness was excited, and the generous magnanimity of his nature made hope prevalent. He hastened forward therefore to overtake her, and prostrate himself at her feet; but the path again divided into two, and he unfortunately took the wrong, so that she reached the house, and was safe in her own room, before the hastiest steps he could take could bring him thither.

This

This gave him time to pause and to reflect : for he had now no opportunity of seeing her till dinner-time, when her looks, reserved and cold as usual, checked the impetuosity of his feelings. But after he had composed himself, he took an early opportunity of hinting to her in a delicate manner the treasure he had found. It was some time before she understood him. At length looking into her pocket-book, she perceived what she had lost ; and her distress overcame her so much that she burst into tears, which at once excited all the tenderest emotions of Fitz-Albini's heart, and produced a reconciliation in which their mutual affection was sufficiently apparent.

The

The lovers now passed three or four days in the sweetest and most refined pleasure, which the frowns and ill-humour of Mrs. Bracey could not allay. They looked forward to golden days, when possessing the society of each other in ease and opulence at Dallington, the storms which they had passed would teach them to know the value of their good fortune.

But about the fifth morning, the altered looks of Miss St. Leger betrayed some strange change of health or anxiety of mind. Fitz-Albini was alarmed, but could obtain no answer from her, which was satisfactory, though, on the subject of her attachment to him, all her expressions set his heart at ease. Mrs. Bracey

cey seemed again to grow kinder to her, and appearing to have her whole time employed in some correspondence, which made her impatient for the daily intercourse with the post-office, interfered less with their concerns than formerly.

In the mean time Fitz-Albini received, from the steward and attorney of the Bassett estate, continual letters, in which they gave him information of various enquiries demanded of them, evidently to furnish pretensions to some new claimant to the fortune. These circumstances gave them great uneasiness, furnished topics for a variety of most ridiculous as well as injurious reports, and made the tenants fearful and suspicious

suspicious of the person to whom they were to pay their rents, and themselves uncertain as to repairs, and the whole line of their conduct. Nor did the reports operate alone upon those who were connected with the Bassett affairs. As they gathered ground, Fitz-Albini's creditors became clamorous, and himself sometimes worked into a phrenzy of despair. The uneasiness arising from these causes, as well as from the daily declining looks of Miss St. Leger, which now seemed to indicate some very violent disease either of her constitution or her mind, caused a continual fever, which at moments endangered his intellects.

Nobody

Nobody seemed happy but Mrs. Bracey, who was carrying on some scheme, at which, though it evidently delighted her, it was difficult to guess. At those melancholy moments, when the mighty powers of Fitz-Albini's mind exhibited a tremendous gloom which the smallest concussion would shake into a storm, an attentive eye, that could endure to contemplate such horrid depravity, might have seen her inward satisfaction, and the artful provoking manner in which she endeavoured to cause an explosion.

Miss St. Leger's illness at length seemed to require medical advice. Her strength failed: she grew very thin: and an alarming hectic colour sat upon her

her cheeks. A neighbouring physician was called in. He pronounced it to have every appearance of a rapid consumption, increased by some anxiety of mind, which he could not induce her to confess. But he knew enough of Mrs. Bracey, not to hint the matter before her; and he was too delicate to suggest it to Fitz-Albini.

Yet he was convinced that, unless this anxiety could be removed or softened, her disorder would admit of no remedy; and he took the opportunity in a day or two, from a letter in which she seemed to be earnestly employed, to suggest the necessity of her avoiding at present any mental exertion. She remonstrated, and told him, that the urgency of the
affair

affair rendered it impossible for her to abstain from a very troublesome and perplexing correspondence. He asked her, if she could find no assistant?—"No," she cried, very earnestly, "it is impossible, Dr. Carver: the matter is too delicate." He rallied her very gently: but it was in vain. She seemed too much agitated for him to deem it prudent to press the subject any farther that day. The next he found her in tears—and the symptoms of her disease evidently increased. A letter lay open before her: on her table were scattered a variety of papers, and a few old parchments which she endeavoured to huddle together on his entering the room; and a sheet of paper half-written by herself, with many scratches,

appeared to have been occupying her whole attention at the moment.

The utmost agitation was betrayed by her manner as he addressed her, and she could not immediately even recover her voice—She enquired anxiously regarding Mrs. Bracey and Fitz-Albini, as if fearful he would be followed by either of them into the room; and, when she seemed secure from their intrusion, became gradually more calm. Dr. Carver thought it again proper to press her on the subject of her uneasiness. At length she began, with some hesitation, to confide to him the cause of her anxiety. “You have heard, Dr. Carver,” said she, “of Mr. Fitz-Albini’s claim to the Bassett estate: and
“you

“ you must suppose me, under all the
“ circumstances, very particularly inte-
“ rested in the success of that affair. But
“ it has unluckily fallen to my lot to be
“ pursued and perplexed with enquiries
“ which are intended to furnish evidence
“ against Mr. Fitz-Albini’s right, and
“ as it seems to me by persons, who
“ not knowing how much I am inte-
“ rested in establishing that right, have
“ too plainly betrayed, that their inten-
“ tions are not the most honourable;
“ and that they will not be very scru-
“ pulous in the means, of which they
“ will make use to attain their end. My
“ wish to preserve Mr. Fitz-Albini’s
“ mind from any additional uneasiness
“ has hitherto induced me to keep the
“ secret to myself. But my ignorance

“ of business, and my fear of injuring
 “ his cause and falling into the snare
 “ of villains, (while I should be unhap-
 “ py by concealment to be a bar to
 “ what is just,) have hitherto filled my
 “ mind with such anxiety, as has al-
 “ most overwhelmed it. After weigh-
 “ ing, again and again, every word in
 “ the letters I have been obliged to
 “ write, I have so little satisfied myself,
 “ that my doubts have robbed my
 “ nights of rest, and my days of peace.”
 She then took from a packet of letters
 the following, and begged Dr. Carver
 to read it.

To

To Miss ST. LEGER.

Madam,

The purport of this letter being a matter of business, on which it is necessary for me to address you, but not knowing your direction, I have committed it to a friend, who is going into a county, where he thinks he has heard your name often mentioned, and has undertaken if possible, by enquiring your place of residence, to forward it with certainty to you.

I have instructions, Madam, from a person, to whom I understand it is a matter very near the heart, to discover the true heir to the estate of one Mr.

I 3

Bassett,

Bassett, of Orthingham Park, lately deceased, which estate, I am told, is claimed by a Mr. Fitz-Albini, of Dalington, contrary to the right. I have accordingly searched a great many pedigrees, wills, and other sources of intelligence, with all the labour in my power, and by some clues I have hit upon, I am induced to hope, that considerable light may be thrown upon the object I am desired to attempt, by old pedigrees, deeds, and other papers, which are most probably in your possession as only heir to the antient family of St. Leger.

It appears, Madam, that William St. Leger, of Offington, Esq. younger brother of Sir Edward St. Leger, Knt.
from

from which latter I presume you are descended, married a lady of the house of Auberville, and left a daughter, but what became of that daughter is not hitherto exactly proved from my researches—but I have a strong suspicion she married one of the Bassett family. I request, Madam, that you will permit the pedigrees in your possession, if any, to be examined, or at least that you will examine them yourself and certify this matter to me; as it is probable your documents may be fuller than those in the public offices which I have yet come at. Even the least hint will be serviceable to me, and such, as (excited by the liberality of my employer) I can turn to good account: for no

man, Madam, is more expert to prove
or to defeat than,

Your humble servant,

FRANCIS IRONFANG.

Please to direct to me near
Doctors Commons, London.

“ This letter, Dr. Carver,” continued
Miss St. Leger, “ I am sure you will
“ agree with me, is not a very pleasant
“ one”—Dr. Carver shook his head.
“ The only relics,” added she, “ I do
“ retain of the faded splendors of my
“ poor family, are indeed a few pedi-
“ grees, and musty writings. I know
“ Mr. Fitz-Albini places some value on
“ such things; and I had lately drawn
“ them

“ them forth one day to be presented
“ to him. But I begin to be supersti-
“ tious : I had scarce discovered them,
“ before I was persecuted from an un-
“ expected quarter to make use of them
“ against him. I have searched the
“ most full of these pedigrees with anx-
“ ious eyes ; and it is true, Dr. Carver,
“ that the daughter of Mr. William St.
“ Leger did marry into the Bassett fa-
“ mily. When I found it so, I thought
“ for some moments that the palpita-
“ tion of my heart would have caused
“ my dissolution. But as soon as I could
“ calm myself, I looked again, and dis-
“ covered that it was added, that she
“ died without any children. I rested
“ on this satisfactory intelligence for a
“ whole day : but my ill-stars, or my

“eagerness, or my folly, induced me to
“look farther the next day into this hor-
“rid pedigree; and there I read, that
“Sir Edward St. Leger had another bro-
“ther, Richard, who was older than
“William; and that this very Ri-
“chard married a Bassett, and left
“a daughter, his heir, who married
“a Mr. Weston, from which mar-
“riage, the pedigree says, there were
“descendants. I have lived ever since
“under the tortures of the most unde-
“scribable anxiety. I could honestly
“answer the first question of this Mr.
“Ironfang without injuring Mr. Fitz-
“Albini. But I then should have ad-
“mitted that I was in possession of such
“a pedigree, and I knew not what en-
“quiries were to follow. Letter has
“succeeded.

“ succeeded letter, from which I am
 “ convinced there are few things at
 “ which he would hesitate, to carry his
 “ point : and that he has long been in
 “ the habit of doing such dirty work
 “ for hire, and that practice has made
 “ him very expert in it. He has not
 “ hitherto arrived at the point of this
 “ Weston marriage, but it is too probable
 “ he will ; and that on such a founda-
 “ tion a man so determined, so unprin-
 “ cipated, and so full of tricks as he ap-
 “ pears, will build any schemes he
 “ pleases. I find, from an enquiry I
 “ have had an opportunity to make,
 “ that he bears a very shocking cha-
 “ racter ; and that, out of mere revenge
 “ for some affront to his pride (for the
 “ wretch is proud) he has more than

“once by trick and manœuvre de-
“feated some very palpable rights of
“great importance. In short, Dr. Car-
“ver, Mr. Fitz-Albini has now in-
“dulged the hopes of this estate, so
“necessary to the extrication of his af-
“fairs, so long, and his open but vio-
“lent spirit would so little brook being
“defeated in the justice of his cause by
“any means so low and base, that my
“fearful imagination is overwhelmed
“with the horrors of what will pro-
“bably happen.”

“You alarm yourself too much,”
said Dr. Carver: “it is absolutely ne-
“cessary that you should keep your
“mind more easy—I am glad however
“you have opened the affair to me.
“Perhaps

“ Perhaps I may be able to obtain some
“ satisfactory intelligence for you by
“ some opportunity which may occur,
“ to fathom the plot of this Mr. Iron-
“ fang.”

The first moments of exemption from great pain, either of the body or the mind, are moments of the most exquisite pleasure. Miss St. Leger's mind was relieved from a great weight by this conversation with Dr. Carver; and for the remainder of the day Hope painted every thing before her once more in lively colours. Fitz-Albini, whose trembling sensibility was amongst the strongest of his characteristics, caught the improvement of her looks, and indulged in a cheerfulness and energy of conversation,

sation, with which she was delighted at the moment, but which she afterwards felt to have been too violent for her exhausted strength. A restless and enfeebling fever returned in the night; and she rose in the morning with all the symptoms of a confirmed consumption.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. CARVER, in the four-and-twenty hours which intervened before he saw Miss St. Leger again, often revolved in his mind the subject of their last conversation. He had seen enough of the world to have attained no inconsiderable penetration into human characters.

Hence some suspicions entered his head, which he did not think proper at present to declare. He saw with much concern the anxieties and perplexities in
which

which Fitz-Albini and Miss St. Leger were both involved, because he could not conceal from himself that there was too strong a cause, which he feared would rather increase than diminish.

Mean while a thousand new reports sprung up regarding Fitz-Albini's disappointment, and final surrender of all claim of the Bassett estate. Creditors, ferocious and blood-thirsty, instantly took a new alarm, and by all the arts of legal tyranny and extortion began new attacks upon a property of which his fondness made him too fearful, and his pure and unsophisticated mind too lofty, to know the little tricks of defence. His mighty spirit boiled into a tempest at the degradation of being necessitated to

to encounter such nests of hornets and reptiles.

He now experienced in its full force the perfidy of mankind, the vanity of friendship, and the insecurity of that respect, which, though supposed to have derived its foundation from the superiority of intellectual or moral qualities, flies totally away at the near approach of adversity *. Men, who had added to the sacred tie of professional secrecy the constant declarations, almost from childhood, of personal intimacy, of kindness and good wishes, by which his ingenuous heart had been drawn into

* "Light they disperse, and with them go
"The summer friend, the flattering foe."

Gray's Ode.

the

the most unlimited confidence of all his embarrassments, now volunteered it in shaking their heads upon the subject of his affairs; and lest they should be supposed to derive any remote (however small and unjust) discredit from having been privy to his incumbrances, actually went beyond the narrow track of their professional knowledge, to utter opinions before those whom they had been always taught were his most bitter enemies, which, though they were of no value from their total incompetence in such speculations, yet were (and were intended to be) confounded with those sentiments which derived credit from the skill of their vocations. Even in matters of fact, by a voluntary blindness, or most inexcusable inadvertence, they
often

often made gross and injurious mistakes, by lowering the amount of his rents, or increasing the size of his debts. And it added to the injury, that some of these very men, were men remarkable for their close and reserved natures, men, who professed in their own affairs not "to let even the left hand know what the right hand was doing," at the very moment that they were playing on the open and ingenuous disposition of Fitz-Albini.

While the universal outcry received such encouragement from those who were bound by the most solemn oaths, and every obligation of honour and gratitude at least, to have been silent, all the Mortgagees gave legal notice to him,

as

as if by common consent, to pay-in the principal of their mortgages together : and each began a separate suit in chancery, of which the very costs would be tremendous.

The burden of so many distracting cares began to have a very visible effect on the constitution and the temper of Fitz-Albini. Sometimes he sunk for days beneath the gloomy effects of a dull despair. Sometimes a more hurried and flighty influence seemed to have taken possession of his mind. And now and then a day of calm and magnanimous resolution restored all his faculties, and made them shine more brilliantly amid the surrounding storm. Then it was that he seemed to have cast away in scorn
from

from his memory the groveling wretches who had so basely injured him, and triumphantly to bear all before him by the vigor of his abilities, and to rise more glorious from his difficulties. At such moments his cowardly enemies shrunk into their dirty holes—but alas! to devise with more inscrutable art their cruel and pusillanimous schemes of destruction!

Dr. Carver, before his return to Orleton, had been called to attend at Sir James Pickman's; where the mouths of the whole family were soon opened on the subject of Fitz-Albini: and Miss Pickman ventured with peculiar malice to insinuate a report, that Miss St. Leger herself was busily employed in schemes to defeat

defeat him of the Bassett estate, that it might fall to her own lot, and be conferred with her hand upon his rival Le Strange. At so diabolical an insinuation Dr. Carver's surprize alone prevented his openly expressing his abhorrence. This surprize gave him time to reflect, before he spoke : and he then deemed it prudent to treat such scandal, at least for the present, as ridiculous rather than wicked.

But when he arrived at Orleton, he found the disorder of Miss St. Leger's mind violently increased ; and of course every symptom of her illness much more alarming. Nor was he long at a loss for the cause. He found she had received an anonymous letter containing
a similar

a similar accusation to that which he had heard from the Pickman family, with some hints that it had also been communicated to Fitz-Albini. Her spirits sunk beneath such unjust treatment, and all the consolation of Dr. Carver could not revive her.

When he communicated to Mrs. Bracey the dangerous state of the lovely girl's health, the wretched and hard-hearted woman smiled with an exultation which could only have arisen from the devil, and cried, "poh! poh! never mind a love-sick girl: she only thinks it pretty to die for that brute Fitz-Albini!"—"Madam," answered Dr. Carver, in a very solemn and impressive voice, "this is too serious for
" a joke,

“ a joke, I assure you !”—“ Ah well,” she replied, “ never mind, Dr. Carver, “ never mind, I say :—the Bassett for- “ tune for that :—what business has she “ to be intriguing, and writing letters, “ and busying herself in private !—I “ know, Dr. Carver, I know all !” To such harangues as this, where folly, cruelty, and wickedness, were combined in so extraordinary a manner, it was impossible to make any answer.

Fitz-Albini was now absent for nearly a week, during which Miss St. Leger heard nothing of him ; and all the skill of Dr. Carver could not prevent the complicated anxiety of her mind from making rapid strides upon her constitution.

The

The unfortunate young man had indeed received a letter containing the false accusations which she dreaded would be communicated to him ; and, that it might gain the greater credit with him, mutilated accounts of her correspondence with Mr. Francis Ironfang, and dark references to proofs of its existence were so made, that in the uncertainty of his distracted ideas he had instantly, without taking leave of her, departed for London.

There he found out the residence of this vile disgrace to the human character, and, by the means of a friend, obtained many presumptive confirmations of his correspondence with Miss St. Leger. The fever of his mind now be-

came too violent for controul ; he complained of the universal perfidy of human beings : he cursed the hour of his birth ; and he had always on his lips the following pathetic lines of Sandys's " Paraphrase of Job * :"

" O perish may the day, which first gave light
To me, most wretched ! And the fatal night
Of my conception ! Let that day be bound
In clouds of pitch, nor walk the Ethereal round.
Let God not write it in his roll of days :
Nor let the Sun restore it with his rays.
Let Death's dark shades involve, no light appear
But dreadful lightnings : its own horrors fear.

* George Sandys, a younger son of Edwin Sandys, archbishop of York. He flourished in the time of Charles I. and was a great friend of the celebrated lord Falkland. His poems are now unjustly neglected. The passage is from the third chapter of Job.

Be it the first of miseries to all,
Or last of life; defam'd with funeral !
O be that dismal night for ever blind !
Lost in itself: nor to the day rejoin'd !
Nor number'd in the swift circumference
Of months and years; but vanish in offence !
O let it sad and solitary prove :
No spritely music hear, nor songs of love !
Let wand'ring apparitions then affright
The trembling pride, and quench the nuptial
light !
O let those hate it, who the daylight hate,
Who mourn and groan beneath their sorrow's
weight.
Let the eclipsed Moon her throne resign ;
Instead of stars, let blazing meteors shine.
Let it not see the dawning fleck the skies,
Nor the grey Morning from the ocean rise :
Because the door of Life it left unclos'd ;
And me, a wretch, to cruel fates expos'd.
Oh why was I not strangled in the womb !
Nor in that secret prison found a tomb !

Or since untimely born ; why did not I
 (The next of blessings) in that instant die ?
 Why kneel'd the midwife at my mother's throes !
 With pain produc'd ! and nurse for future woes !
 Else had I an eternal requiem kept :
 And in the arms of Peace for ever slept :
 With kings and princes rank'd ; who lofty frames
 In deserts rais'd, t' immortalize their names :
 Who made the wealth of provinces their prey :
 In death as mighty, and as rich as they.
 Then I, as an abortive, had not been ;
 Nor with the hated light such sorrows seen :
 Slept, where none ere by violence oppress'd ;
 And where the weary from their labors rest :
 No prisoners there, inforc'd by torments, cry ;
 But fearless by their old tormentors lie :
 The mean and great on equal bases stand ;
 No servants there obey, nor lords command.
 Why should afflicted souls in anguish live ?
 And only have immunity to grieve ?
 Oh how they wish for Death to close their eyes !
 But oh, in vain ! since he the wretched flies.

For

For whom they dig, as pioneers for gold ;
 Which the dark entrails of the earth unfold :
 And having found him, as their liberty,
 With joy encounter ; and contented die.
 Why should he live, from whom God hath the
 path
 Of safety hid, incompast with his wrath ?
 In storms of sighs I taste my bitter food :
 My groans break from me like a roaring flood.
 The ruin which I fear'd, and in my thought
 So oft revolv'd, one fatal hour hath brought.
 Nor durst I on prosperity presume ;
 Or time in sleep and barren ease consume ;
 But watch'd my wary steps : and yet for all
 My providence, these plagues upon me fall *."

The disorder of his brain made him
 guilty of many eccentric actions ; and a

* I have heard that poor Collins, the poet, was
 fond of repeating the former part of this poem.

K 3. thousand

thousand dreadful thoughts urged him on to many momentary resolves, at which he afterwards shuddered. His frantic looks, his desultory and uncertain steps, attracted notice wherever he went. Often did he resolve to leave his native country, never to visit it again; and he actually travelled as far as Dover, where he remained for several days, marked by the wildness of his appearance though unknown. Often was he seen lingering along the beach, or hanging over the edge of the highest cliffs by moonlight; and once, by the flashes of lightning that broke through the gloom of a most tremendous storm, his figure was observed during the whole of it, sometimes walking hastily to and fro
on

on that giddy height which Shakespear has so nobly described.

At length a most pathetic and beautiful letter from Miss St. Leger, at once explanatory of her innocence, her affection, and her sufferings, was by some means forwarded to him from London, whither it had been directed, and at once put an end to any other passion in Fitz-Albini than that of tenderness. His fever subsided; the tumults of his brain were calmed; and he hastened back by rapid journeys to Orleton, to intreat forgiveness for his unfounded suspicions.

He threw himself at her feet, and received nothing but a gentle reproof, at once so delicate, so dignified, and so

affectionate, that it heightened all her charms. But as soon as the first agitations of the meeting were over, he perceived such an alarming change of health in her looks, as again to throw him into agonies. And in this alarming state, when she peculiarly required every kind attention, she observed an increased ferocity in the behaviour of the insolent and brutal Mrs. Bracey towards her; while she herself betrayed a sharpness and disgust towards that abominable woman, which she seemed any longer incapable of concealing.

Dr. Carver, who soon after arrived, seemed at least as incapable of disguising his aversion as Miss St. Leger; and from some hints which they threw out

as

as soon as that person left the room, the curiosity of Fitz-Albini was excited. It then became necessary to explain to him, in the softest manner they could devise, their suspicion (for they assured him it yet amounted only to a suspicion), that Mrs. Bracey was implicated in employing Mr. Francis Irongfang to defeat his claim to the Bassett estate. Fitz-Albini's countenance instantly fired; he rose from his seat, and nothing less than the tears as well as intreaties of Miss St. Leger could have prevented his bursting out of the room, to seek for some instant revenge.

Dr. Carver's exertions and influence at length brought him to his reason; and, as he became calmer, he again asked

many particulars of this wicked plot, which it was impossible to avoid solving to him; and he could only be induced by Dr. Carver, who represented to him the injurious effect which any farther agitation at present of Miss St. Leger's spirits would have, to defer the subject, on condition of having the pedigrees and other old papers laid before him on the following morning.

But the following morning did not bring the opportunity with it. Some urgent business necessitated his immediate return to Dallington. In his absence reports were again circulated, with more than usual diligence, of the certainty of another claimant having established his right to the Bassett estate.

And

And the uncommon elation of Mrs. Bracey now afforded too strong a presumption that she thought herself successful in the scheme, whatever it might be, which she was carrying on.

Miss St. Leger, who continued very ill, had intreated to be permitted to leave the house at Orleton, which was now become scarcely endurable to her, notwithstanding she was an orphan, and had no other protection, no kind home to retreat to. But this did not answer the purposes of Mrs. Bracey; she was determined to prevent her departure, and not only assigned such cruel motives for the wish to the whole neighbourhood, and a number of correspondents to

K. 6

whom.

whom she wrote letters for the sole purpose of telling them, but had the harshness to reproach the unhappy girl herself in the coarsest language with such indelicate designs, that, overwhelmed with terror, she yielded to the endurance of her present irksome abode.

Fitz-Albini, on his arrival at Dallington, had found his difficulties so increased, that, notwithstanding the temporary ease which Miss St. Leger's letter of explanation had given him, he began again to sink into despair. The ill-usage, the ingratitude, the desertion, he experienced from almost all quarters, were more than the boldest temper could withstand. And the vile scoffs,
which

which continually reached his ears, drove him almost to madness *.

But his anxiety for the health of Miss St. Leger soon recalled him to Orleton. The first looks which encountered him were the insidious smiles of Mrs. Bracey,

* "Oh bitter change! now boys my groans deride;

The wretched object of their scorn and pride:

Whose fathers I unworthy held to keep,

With less contemned dogs, my flocks of sheep.

- - - - -

The sons of ideots, of ignoble birth,

Contaminate, and viler than the earth,

Yet now am I obnoxious to their wrongs:

A by-word, and the subject of their songs;

Who exercise their tongues in my disgrace;

Abhor my paths, and spit upon my face."

Sandys's Paraphrase of Job, chap. xxx.

omens

omens which now filled him with the most dreadful apprehensions. On his introduction to Miss St. Leger, her pallid looks and faint smiles sunk to the bottom of his heart ; and the cup of his misery seemed full.—The object of his warmest affection dying—his worldly hopes all blasted—and his hereditary estates, which to retain was a chief point of both his wishes and his duty, hastening into the yawning gulph of merciless and extortionary creditors !—

The fullen aspect of despair succeeded the tumultuous flashes that used to mark his countenance and his manners. He talked as if he was indifferent to every thing ; and no provocations seemed any longer to rouse him. The long roll of
Miss

Miss St. Leger's descent stood in a corner of the room; and as he traversed slowly to and fro, he took it up, and opened it, as if he scarce knew what he was about.

After a moment's gaze, there seemed in it something, which vehemently caught his attention. He started:—he half muttered some imperfect questions, which however he seemed in an instant to recall. He threw down the parchments, and again impatiently traversed the room.—A gleam of joy appeared to brighten his countenance, and again he relapsed into the most despondent gloominess.

For

For the whole remainder of the day, some important subject seemed peculiarly to employ and agitate his mind. He continually resorted to the library of Mr. Bracey, meagre as it was. And when at length night came, without his having made to Miss St. Leger any communications, which yet at intervals he had discovered a great anxiety to enter upon, he seemed to take his leave with the greatest hesitation; but the next morning he left Orleton at a very early hour, having entrusted the servants with no other message to the family, than that he should shortly return.

If it had been possible for the embarrassments of Miss St. Leger's mind to receive any addition, this strange
and.

and mysterious conduct of Fitz-Albini must have added cruelly to her sufferings. In her pale cheeks and languid looks the symptoms of an early decay grew every hour more alarming. But at those moments, when the grave seemed to be her nearest prospect, her mind appeared most calm and chearful. A tender smile sat upon her countenance, and there was a gentle tinge upon her cheek, which, while it added to her beauty, bespoke the danger of her situation.

Within the grounds of Orleton, in a recluse spot, stood the parish church.—Thither, when she could steal away by herself, she continually bent her walk, and sat for hours in the church-yard, musing.

musing among the village graves. On one of these occasions her feelings dictated to her the following

SONNET,

Written in the Church-yard of
ORLETON.

Ye who beneath these mouldering heaps have
found

Rest from the sorrows of humanity !

I come to keep my vigils on the ground

Where I, too, soon at peace with you shall be !

Then when this throbbing heart has ceas'd to
beat,

And lifeless lies this weak and trembling
frame,

Malice itself perchance may not repeat

The cruel sounds that now assail my name.

With flowing tears upon the turf I bend,

Beneath whose shade my ashes will decay ;

And

And thus, I cry, Fresh flowers, your perfumes lend
To the lone gales that o'er my grave will play !
And thus, ye breezes, in the solemn tone
Of calm and heav'n-rapt melancholy, moan !

Mrs. Bracey saw with fiend-like triumph the rapid strides of the disorder which was consuming her vital powers, and had even the unparalleled barbarity to continue aggravating her feelings by a thousand sly hints and inferences, as well of Fitz-Albini as herself.

At length Dr. Carver insisted in such a manner upon her removal to Bristol, that Mrs. Bracey, induced by the opportunity she gained of making a jaunt of pleasure thither herself, consented to
the

the scheme. The amiable and uncomplaining girl wrote a few lines in as cheerful a style as she could to Fitz-Albini, directed to his house at Dallington, to inform him of their intentions—and the next day but one they were to set off from Orleton.

Miss St. Leger's spirits now began to sink at the idea of leaving, probably for ever, a place in which, though she had received there much ill usage from Mrs. Bracey, yet she had first admitted and cherished that passion which was intertwined with all the fondest vibrations of her heart. The lawns, the trees, the shades, the tints of the varying seasons, the peculiar lights of the setting-sun as it fell upon particular spots,

spots, the very hollow murmurs of the wind round the corner of the house, where her own chamber was situated, were all associated with her ideas, and impressed on her heart, and called the tears into her eyes, as she reflected that she was about to leave them.

It was in such a mood that she was sitting wrapped up in the tender visions of her own mind—having just escaped to her room from a breakfast-table, where the brutal manners of Mrs. Bracey had rendered her capable of staying no longer, when she heard the most shrill screams intermingled with the foulest language, which she soon recognized to be the voice of the lady whom she had just left in one of those
fits

fits of furious ill-temper, that her husband was vainly endeavouring to soothe. Used as she was to such horridly discordant noises, she felt them in her present state of mind peculiarly distressing, and therefore determined to task her strength, that she might get rid of them, by a lonely walk into a favourite part of the park, in which she might bid her last adieu to scenes, where she had enjoyed almost all the pleasure an unfortunate life had afforded her.

She tottered down a back-stair-case, and gently stealing out of a side-door had made but little progress in her walk, before she discovered the failure of her strength. A lonely bench under a spreading oak at the corner of a little
copse

copse soon afforded her rest. She sat down almost exhausted, and as the fresh air blew upon her became less faint, and more composed. She turned her eyes upon the objects around. A calm and beautiful scene opened before her view—numerous sheep feeding with eager pleasure upon a rich lawn—mighty trees, the growth of centuries, expanding their umbrageous arms in solemn dignity—cheerful cottages—healthy and contented labourers—and a respectable and satisfied tenantry.—“How mysterious,” said she to herself, “and inscrutable are the ways of Providence! How strangely do the blessings of this world seem to be allotted! Riches, a situation of worldly respect, a delightful habitation,

“ tion, virtuous and honourable alli-
 “ ances, often fall to the lot of those,
 “ who deserve no good, and are inca-
 “ pable of making a proper use of such
 “ advantages ! whom poverty, scorn,
 “ and disease could not make more
 “ wretched than they make themselves
 “ and all around them ! While they,
 “ whose hearts are formed to feel the
 “ value of the blessings, and who have
 “ forfeited their qualification for them
 “ by no crimes of their own, are often
 “ fated to penury, dependence, dere-
 “ liction, and all the accumulated sor-
 “ rows most afflictive to a heart of sen-
 “ sibility ! Alas ! what black sins can
 “ I have committed to deserve so very
 “ cruel a lot !—Or can I be presumptu-
 “ ous

“ous in confidering myfelf lefs unde-
 “ferving than Mrs. Bracey?

“Or real pains, or thofe which fancy raife,
 “For ever blot the funfhine of my days;
 “To ficknefs ftill, and ftill to grief a prey,
 “Health turns from me her rofy face away.

“Did e’er this tongue the flanderer’s tale pro-
 “claim,
 “Or madly violate my Maker’s name?
 “Did e’er this heart betray a friend or foe,
 “Or know a thought but all the world might
 “know *?”

“Yet acutely as I feel the cruelty
 “of my deftiny, it is not for myfelf
 “alone that I feel it.—The grave will
 “foon open to receive me into the
 “quiet of its bofom.—But for Fitz-

* R. Weft.—See Gray’s Poems, by Maſon, p. 19.

“ Albini !—while I reflect upon *his*
“ sufferings—while I contemplate the
“ sacrifice of such a mind, such genius,
“ such virtues, as his, to a complication
“ of difficulties and persecutions, which
“ would seem a punishment almost too
“ severe even for the basest crimes, I
“ cannot appease the agonies of my
“ grief by looking forward to the self-
“ ish peace of Death !—Yet, Father of
“ Mercies, it is impious to complain !
“ Thou only knowest what is for our
“ good ! I will submit to thy decrees
“ without a murmur !”

She burst into tears ;—a strange mist
came over her eyes, and her senses were
bewildered ! A variety of indescribable
figures seemed to her to people the
lawn

lawn before her—and mingled sounds both of tenderness and lamentation rung in her ears. A shape appeared to approach her like that of Fitz-Albini; but instead of the mournful and dejected looks he had lately worn, it hastened forward with all the eagerness of uncontrollable delight. It fell at her feet, and caught her hand.—She attempted to speak—but the words died upon her lips—she shrieked, and fell senseless on the bench.—

It was indeed Fitz-Albini himself, who, now half-distracted, was a long while before he could recover her from the fainting fit, into which she had fallen; and at length, with the aid of one of the servants who luckily was passing

near the spot, conveyed her back to the house, where she was conducted to her own chamber, before she had at all recovered her reason or knew where she was.

Dr. Carver was instantly sent for, and some opiates were administered, which caused her some hours of quiet sleep—while Fitz-Albini, who appeared plunged into inexpressible distraction, by the violence with which this new misfortune seemed to have followed some great and unexpected joy, was almost forcibly, by Dr. Carver's order, removed from watching at her bedside, where his convulsive sighs and raving exclamations rendered it very improper for him to remain.

But had it not been for her sake, it would soon have become necessary for his own, that he should be torn away from her.—What passed would have been too affecting for feelings very different from his to endure,—The amiable sufferer often smiled in her sleep—and then wept.—She muttered the name of Fitz-Albini as if she was talking to him.—“Fitz-Albini,” she said, “is it
 “you? Why, you look so happy!—
 “Where, where—what’s come?—there
 “now—gloomy again—no tears—why
 “it will soon be over—and then we
 “shall meet again—yes, yes—no more
 “partings—it is over, Fitz-Albini—
 “the pang is over—but I will pray for
 “you”—and then the tears streamed down her cheeks, and choked her words.

After a few convulsive struggles, her features became more composed—her voice became more distinct again—and an angelic smile sat upon her countenance.—“Hark!” she said, “what sounds were those! It begins—hasten, Fitz-Albini, hasten—the chorus begins.—See! what a blaze was that! I go—I put on immortality!”

Nature seemed quite exhausted by this effort. She sunk into a repose so like to death, that for three hours the attendants could scarce perceive that she breathed. At the end of that time there seemed to be a crisis, which Dr. Carver thought favourable. The two following days she was kept in the most composed state that the skill of this excellent

cellent physician could effect ; but the senses seemed hitherto totally gone. On the third day, when she waked, she asked, where she was, and where she had been ?—" I have seen," she said, " the strangest sights—so strange, that " they are beyond all description, and " exceed every thing my imagination " could have conceived !"—She paused, and then with a more hesitating voice she enquired after Fitz-Albini.—" I " have seen his apparition," she added, " I am sure I have seen his apparition, " —but it smiled upon me—and pre- " dicted some good fortune—my heart " feels lighter than it ever did, since I " began to reflect—and I am confident " some lucky omen attends him.—Sure I " have had a long sleep ; for I have had

“ such heavenly dreams, as it is impossi-
“ ble for me to find language for.—
“ Methought I was risen from my grave
“ to scenes of ineffable glory—where
“ I saw the souls of the virtuous seated
“ all around me in a temple of inde-
“ scribable splendour ; and heard mu-
“ sic of such exquisite tones, that, after
“ my ears had been some time ravished
“ with it, it waked me with excess of
“ pleasure—but my exhausted frame
“ soon sunk to repose again, and I have
“ no recollection what since has become
“ of me.—Yet Fitz-Albini ! the appari-
“ tion of Fitz-Albini still haunts me—
“ I am sure that was no dream.—Where
“ is he ? I shall never be easy till I see
“ him !”

The

The attendants assured her, he was well; but gave her no farther information, till they had consulted Dr. Carver, who thought her not yet sufficiently recovered to see a person about whom she must be naturally so agitated—and who himself was not likely to possess the calmness necessary on such an occasion.—

Fitz-Albini indeed, from this fresh repulsion and disappointment, at a moment he appeared to have some subject of great congratulation to communicate, had been in a state little less dangerous, and much more violent and distracted, than Miss St. Leger herself. Nor did Dr. Carver dare immediately to trust

the effect that the interview might have upon either.

It became at the same time a task of the utmost difficulty and manoeuvre, to restrain the ill-temper and the intrigues of Mrs. Bracey ; who, while she seemed under considerable terror from a guilty conscience, had become furious at some disappointment which embittered her malice against both the sufferers ; notwithstanding Mr. Bracey, who seemed in possession of some unfortunate secret regarding his wife, exerted every effort to preserve peace between them.

However, the rapid return which every day brought, of health and strength to Miss St. Leger, gradually also re-
esta-

established calmness in Fitz-Albini's mind.

The long-wished interview was at length permitted—but the feelings of both were too big for utterance, and only a few broken sentences escaped from either. Another and another day passed, without any very interesting communications. She often observed, at a pause in the conversation, that he looked thoughtful.—His bosom heaved, and his breath grew short, as if he had something important which he was on the point of telling her, but yet had not courage;—then he would grow absent again, and after a little while turn the conversation as if in despair.—Yet at times there was a gleam of sunshine on his

countenance, which she had never before seen there. When alone, she revolved in her mind with great curiosity and uneasiness the cause of this reserve, while the increasing brutality of Mrs. Bracey aggravated her sufferings.

At length Mrs. Bracey entered her room one morning with looks more ferocious than she had ever before exhibited; and Miss St. Leger was shaking with terror under the effect of them, when Fitz-Albini came in. He saw her agitation, and the abashed look of the other, who departed almost instantly on his approach.—“What is the matter with Mrs. Bracey?” she asked, in tears.—“I know not,” cried he—“but do not regard her—she is not worth
“ your

“ your tears—indeed, she is not, my
“ angel !”

“ You smile, Fitz-Albini !” she re-
plied faintly—“ have you cause to
“ smile ? Have you good news to tell
“ me ?”

“ Are your nerves strong enough to
“ hear good news ?” he rejoined.

A faint and doubtful colour illumined
her cheek—her eyes recovered a ten-
der animation ; and she said, tenderly,
“ I think I am—but good news is so
“ strange to me, that I hardly know its
“ effect !”

“ Can

“Can you bear to hear some pleasing information regarding the Orlingham estate?” cried he.

Miss St. Leger.—“To be sure I can. Is it possible for you to doubt, but that what so essentially concerns you, will be delightful to me?”

Fitz-Albini.—“Concerns *me!*—it concerns *you* still more than it does me.”

Miss St. Leger.—“How is that possible? Do you think so ill of me as to suppose that I set a higher value on riches than yourself?—Has it been for the sake of money, that my attachment to you has been formed?”

Fitz-

Fitz-Albini smiled.—“ Be calm,” he cried, “ my beloved angel, and prepare yourself for wonders !”

Miss St. Leger endeavoured to suppress a rising tear—and to hide her increasing agitation.

Fitz-Albini.—“ Where is your old vellum pedigree, that you remember my once unfolding ?”

She looked round ; it had stood in a corner of the room before her illness, but was gone.—

Fitz-Albini.—“ Well, never mind—do not agitate yourself—it has been a lucky pedigree for you.”

Miss

Miss St. Leger became still more confused. She could not guess what all this could mean.—

Fitz-Albini.—“ Was not your grandmother a Brailesford ?”

Miss St. Leger.—“ Certainly”——

Fitz-Albini.—“ Was her mother a Meynill ?”

Miss St. Leger.—“ I think, nay I am certain, she was.”——

Fitz-Albini.—“ And her mother was an heiress—whose name was—*Weston* ; was it not ?”

Miss

Miss St. Leger still more confused, and her heart beating so, that she had scarce breath to answer—"I have heard
 " she was an heiress—but—but I did
 " not recollect her name was *Weston*!"

Fitz-Albini.—"But it was *Weston*,
 " my beloved girl, as I have proof
 " enough, and the consequence is, that
 " —(I intreat you to be calm)—the
 " consequence is,—that you are the real
 " heiress of the Bassett family, and the
 " Orlingham estate belongs to you!"—

It is not wonderful that Miss St. Leger should not have had strength enough to bear this extraordinary discovery. She sunk back in her chair, and was many minutes before she recovered

covered her senses.—At length she revived, and after a few moments, casting her blue eyes with inexpressible softness upon Fitz-Albini, she cried, in a tremulous voice, “Is this a dream, Fitz-Albini?—If it is not, (for surely you are too kind to deceive me) then indeed shall I be blessed at last—for I shall have an opportunity of conferring a blessing upon you!” She sunk upon his shoulder, and again overcome with her feelings she fainted in his arms.

CHAPTER VIII.

—

THIS extraordinary discovery, which had been some time in the possession of Fitz-Albini, he had come to Orlton to communicate to Miss St. Leger, the day on which she was seized with a delirium, partly in consequence of his sudden appearance, while she was sitting by herself on a bench in the grounds.—The delirium, and the low subsequent state to which she had been reduced, had

had rendered it too hazardous to communicate it to her at an earlier period.

Fitz-Albini, from the moment he saw the splendid and full pedigree of Miss St. Leger by the casual inspection which has been already mentioned, was struck with the marriage between Richard St. Leger (Sir Edward's younger brother) and a Bassett; and the circumstance of their leaving a daughter and heiress married into the family of Weston. His vast knowledge of genealogies gave him instantly a confused recollection of an alliance between the Westons and Meynills: and he was sure that the Meynills and Brailesfords were ancestors of Miss St. Leger. Another circumstance instantly recurred to his mind, which

which strengthened him in this idea. He recollected among the quarterings which Miss St. Leger's father had used, a repetition of the St. Leger arms with the addition of a mark of branch, to which he could only be entitled by some descent from the heiress of a younger son of his own family.

From the moment these ideas entered his head, his brain was in a fever till he could obtain some more satisfactory intelligence. And this had hastened him away so abruptly from Orlton, whence he had immediately posted to London; where by recourse to wills, and the aid of an attorney, in whose possession he knew were many of the deeds which had passed away with the estates from the
St. Leger

St. Leger family, he soon collected the most decisive proof, that Mr. Weston, whose wife was the daughter of Mr. Richard St. Leger by a Bassett, had also left an only child his heiress, who, by marrying Sir William Meynill, was the great-great-grandmother of Miss St. Leger. Nor was his proof less satisfactory that she was the *sole* representative of all these families; for though Sir William Meynill left three sons, they all died unmarried.

Fitz-Albini had now also acquired evidence, which put it beyond all controversy, that there was no descendant from any of the Bassett family subsequent to the above match of Jane Bassett with Richard St. Leger, so that she
must

must by inevitable consequence be put into undisturbed possession of the Orlingham estate.

This most astonishing concurrence of good fortune had filled his mind with a kind of awe and gratitude to Providence, which made him upbraid himself for the discontent and murmurs that had formerly escaped from his lips. Yet when he arrived at Orlton, and received a new blow from the agonizing illness of Miss St. Leger, he was seized with a despair more violent than ever, and seemed to think, that what had happened served only to aggravate his misfortune.

Her returning health, and the tender sensibility and excellence of heart she displayed

played at this turn of fortune, were now fast reviving his gratitude and peace of mind. To unite in the possession of the same person, the idol of his affections, and the restorer of his fortune, while all his father's dying injunctions which had pressed most heavily on his conscience were at once removed, seemed blessings almost too great for humanity!

But each day added something to the renewal of Miss St. Leger's strength. Yet, while all her feelings were brightened by that gentle cheerfulness, which it would have been base ingratitude not to indulge, she betrayed none of the boisterous triumph of hope; and there was now and then a tender melancholy in her countenance which seemed
to

to insinuate a fear that her bliss was too exquisite to last.

Almost every one, however, seemed to congratulate the rapid improvement of her looks: and it was certain, that she had never been so beautiful before. The colour in her cheeks was softer and more exquisite than painters had ever exhibited: and the feminine sensibility of her whole form was increased by the languor which her illness had left behind it.

Her mind appeared to soar beyond itself, and almost to have put off every thing earthly. She was now permitted to take long walks with Fitz-Albini, though Dr. Carver perpetually cau-

tioned her not to presume too soon on her strength. But the summer was far advanced, and they could sit for hours on the rustic benches of the park, and admire the scenery around them, and talk over the future schemes of their life.

The prospect of enjoying Dallington without any embitterments—of enjoying it restored to more than its pristine splendour—of enjoying it in the society of each other—seemed like a fairy dream, which they hardly knew how to think real.

Now and then, as Fitz-Albini related to her the circumstances of the Orlingham estate, which, immensely-timbered

as

as it was, he lately found to be nearly double the value of which he was first informed—and as he pictured out with a sanguine fancy the particulars of their future plans, a gentle sigh, which she made every effort to conceal from him, would involuntarily escape her. “Is it possible,” thought she, “that I shall yet be reserved for all this happiness?” For her constitution still betrayed at times to her the ravages it had lately undergone.

Nor could she contemplate the starts of wildness, which still continued occasionally to cross the countenance of Fitz-Albini, without excessive anxiety. It was too evident that the convulsions with which both his head and his heart

had been torn, had left their traces behind them. Particular characters appeared to have fixed an impression of horror upon him, which, when their images recurred to his mind, agitated his nerves with a most alarming fermentation. The negligence of his dress, the impetuosity of his manner, the deep silence and fits of absence into which he sometimes sunk, all bespoke to observers of sensibility the too violent concussion which a most admirable genius and disposition had suffered. And the fever of unexpected delight now perhaps contributed to keep away that quiet, which hitherto his difficulties and misfortunes had rendered him a stranger to.

“ Am

“Am I ungrateful to Providence,” said she to herself as a cloud sometimes came over her spirits, “for my good fortune? Or is it intended, for our final benefit, that we may not set our affections too much on the blessings of this world?”

A deep sigh rose from her bosom, and tears filled her eyes. Fitz-Albini entered the room before she could wipe them off. His looks betrayed that he perceived them: he became grave—and then half angry—but a tender smile from her, reproached him with his injustice, and he recovered the benignity of his countenance.

As the plans of their future life became the topics of their conversation, it excited the admiration of Miss St. Ledger to listen to the noble career which his abilities marked out for him, while she still trembled, at the sanguine colours in which he portrayed it, and at the irritability generated by his sufferings, and so liable to be agonized by future disappointment.

The flow of his eloquence, for which the most glorious field seemed now to open before him, was too likely to be silenced, or at least broken and deranged by opposition; and that regular perseverance by which alone talents arrive at the strength they are capable of attaining, was probably lost to him for ever.

The

The largeness of the fortune he was about to possess, added to the extraordinary powers of his intellect, the sweetness of his natural disposition, and manners which could sometimes be particularly conciliating, would have promised the most extensive popularity.—But the ill-usage he had received, the envy and calumnies his neighbours had thought it safe during his adversity to indulge, had roused a scorn in him, and a rancour in them, not easily changed.

All this, the excellent understanding of Miss St. Leger foresaw—and foresaw it with uneasiness, which with great difficulty she could conceal, as the brilliant imagination of Fitz-Albini pic-

tured forth to her the prospect of their happiness.

The Orlingham estate had now been estimated at 9000*l.* a year, besides the timber which was valued at more than 100,000*l.* a sum which would completely discharge his paternal estate from its incumbrances, so that they would possess a clear rental of at least 18,000*l.* *per annum.*

The variety of benevolent plans they proposed to themselves out of this affluent income were indeed worthy of them, and, when fulfilled, would raise round them a little paradise! But the time when all these delights should take place lingered on too slowly for his impetuous

petuous spirit. Every day seemed a month, and he almost grew sick with the delay.

Mean time Mrs. Bracey was left to the hell of her own reflections on a crime not only unsuccessful, but which had actually been the instrument of putting Fitz-Albini into possession of that very fortune, of which she plotted to deprive him. But both Fitz-Albini, and Miss St. Leger, forbore at present to let her know how well they were informed of the whole particulars of her scheme—and that it was as *her* agent that Mr. Francis Ironfang made the application which led to the happy discovery of Miss St. Leger's right.

The wretched woman, however, in vain endeavoured to conceal the tortures of her mind at the smiling prospects of this unoffending pair, whose schemes in life she had taken so much pains to blast. Yet she saw with some consolation the tremulous state of Miss St. Leger's health, and listened with eager and impatient curiosity to the cautions which Dr. Carver continually impressed on her,—

But the die seemed irrevocably cast : she could no longer keep off the good fortune of which Miss St. Leger was now put into the actual possession ; and the day of her union with Fitz-Albini was fixed. Ten more days—and, freed from

from the power of Mrs. Bracey, she would commit her whole fate in this world to his protection.

Ten fearful days! Every preparation filled her with anxiety—and often she was obliged to retire to her own room, to indulge the tears which she could not restrain.

Fitz Albini, in the ardour of his hopes, saw not the increasing debility of her frame.—Her languor was so seductively soft—the dye of her cheeks was so delicate, that in the beauty which he idolized he saw not the alarming traits which it exhibited to a more calm observer.

“ Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr
blows,
While proudly riding o’er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind’s sway,
That hush’d in grim repose, expects his evening
prey.”

Another week now elapsed, while
Dallington prepared to echo with an
hospitality, which it had never known,
even in its best days —and the old Hall
of Orlingham, also, was set in order for
such feasts as it never yet had furnished.
—But these festivities were principally
intended

intended for the tenants, and neighbouring yeomanry. Neither Fitz-Albini, nor Miss St. Leger, owed any attentions to the 'squires, and such as thought themselves of the gentilitia! order, who would now willingly have paid them both the most fulsome adulation: for the truth is, that they happened for the most part to be a set of people, who disgraced their situation in life—and, living in a peninsulated county, were peculiarly narrow, selfish, ignorant, and envious, as well as of obscure birth, and fordid fortunes.

The manners of Fitz-Albini, and of the angelic girl, to whom he was about to be united, were both of the most extensive popularity among the common people.

people. Their very names carried a certain traditional reverence with them, which not all the splendor of modern riches had been able to give to the obscurity of their most opulent neighbours.

The rare instances of a noble estate, and illustrious birth, united with such talents and qualities as seemed to meet together in Fitz-Albini, made the few, whose penetration and freedom from envy enabled them to appreciate such a character, contemplate his present prosperity with delight and admiration. They beheld in him the eloquence of the enlightened senator, with the independence of the country-gentleman—and the spirit and hospitality of the
Feudal

Feudal chief, without his fierceness, his tyranny, or his uncultivated mind.— Before such a man, all the paths of glory seemed to open—and the ascent to Fame appeared to be covered with flowers.

It was now Wednesday:—and in the evening of the following day it was fixed they should be married, in a private chapel in the house at Orlton.— Miss St. Leger exhibited an uncommon paleness and tremor, which did not escape the notice of Fitz-Albini, who attributed it to the peculiar activity of that excessive sensibility, which she had always discovered on so awful an occasion.

Mrs. Bracey endeavoured to hide the agonies with which malice was afflicting her :

her: and the breakfast was concluded in tolerable composure.—But Fitz-Albini and Miss St. Leger, on leaving the room, which happened at the moment the footman was bringing in his letters, heard, before they could reach another apartment, some of those shrieks and clamours, with which it was not unusual for the lady of the house to entertain her husband. Yet, accustomed as they were to these noises, they thought no more of them, and had of course a variety of topics regarding themselves to discuss, which fully occupied their minds.

Fitz-Albini was now breathing out his soul in tenderness to her; while she was listening with a fearful delight, which,

which, weak and delicate as she was, so affected her, that she could not keep the tears from her eyes. She murmured out some faint sighs, as if she had a foreboding that her strength was exhausted; or that some dreadful evil was near: her sight became dim, and she sunk half-lifeless on his shoulder.—At that moment the door was forced open with a loud burst, and, with the most horrid shrieks and imprecations and all the fury of a maniac, entered Mrs. Bracey. She had just got intelligence by the post, that it was now generally known that herself was the person who employed Ironfang to divest Fitz-Albini of the Bassett estate. This, added to the mortification of failing in the scheme, had provoked her passions beyond controul.

With

With disheveled hair, and a countenance writhed with all the contortions of the most cruel revenge, she darted upon Miss St. Leger, already half-lifeless, and, using every opprobrious term, was about to grasp her hand, when Fitz-Albini, himself scarce in his senses, rising to defend her, heard a faint and mournful murmur, and feeling a convulsed cling, he just distinguished the words—"leave me not—dear, dear
"Fitz-Albini—leave me not—it will—
"soon, very soon be over—May blessing—!" when, as he turned to look on her, her eyes closed—her pulse stopped—and sinking into his arms, she ceased to breathe—for ever, in a world where nothing but unhappiness had been her lot.

Fitz-

Fitz-Albini gazed on her for some minutes in a state of perfect stupefaction, and then, as he uttered the most convulsed shriek that ever came from the heart of distracted sorrow, all his senses by the violence of the blow deserted him at once, and he became agitated with the most raving madness.

Far be from me to attempt to give the heart-breaking picture of his disorder.—His ravings no heart of sensibility could endure. Nor could the hard and guilty bosom of Mrs. Bracey herself, whom the raving fit which seized him soon brought out of her passion, be totally unpunished, since her fears at least afflicted her, if her compassion could not.

What

What a woeful change of events ! the beautiful and angelic Miss St. Leger, moving in slow procession with the tears of thousands to the grave, instead of passing in bridal pomp to the altar ! the halls of Orlingham and Dallington, instead of the gay decorations of merriment and hospitality, hung with fable ! and Fitz-Albini himself, yesterday in the bloom of youth, surrounded by affluence, in the vigor of intellectual splendor, and accompanied by the object of his affections whom a few hours were about to unite to him—to-day a most melancholy maniac—his prospects blasted—his bride dead—his faculties wrecked for ever !

The

The struggle to a frame so irritable as his, was too violent to last long.—The fury of a week closed his sufferings, and dismissed him to join in heaven the spirit of her who had so lately left him.—

Ye moralists, mislead us not by the doctrine, that virtue always meets its reward, and vice its punishment in this world ! It is to a future existence that we must look for a due retribution of our conduct !

Mrs. Bracey yet lives in the enjoyment of all worldly advantages ; while beings such as Fitz-Albini and Miss St. Leger are deposited in their graves :—and the immense united fortunes of
Dalling-

Dallington and Orlingham have fallen, by the course of inheritance, on Captain Fitz-Albini of the Guards; who, without the talents or the virtues of his cousin, and already in possession of a competence for the sphere in life for which his slender abilities fitted him, is now rolling in superfluous wealth, and honours which render his contemptible ambition the more conspicuous.

THE END.



